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THE
Hudson Review

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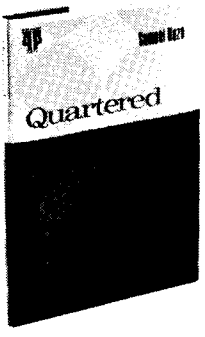

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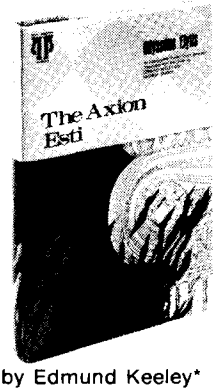

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P. L. SURETTE

"Having His Own Mind to Stand by Him"

IN 1944 POUND TOLD HIS ITALIAN READERS that he had schooled himself for forty years "to write an epic poem which begins 'In the Dark Forest,' crosses the Purgatory of human error, and ends in the light, '*fra i maestri di color che sanno.*' "[1] This claim, that Pound's *Cantos* repeat the comic structure of Dante's *Commedia,* ought not to be dismissed as mere wishful thinking or Poundian bravado, despite the failure of *Rock-Drill, Thrones,* and *Drafts & Fragments* to achieve the promised ascension "toward a greater limpidity" in the Paradiso. Nor, on the other hand, can it possibly be accepted as an accurate description of the *Cantos* in their present form—a form which we must now presume to be final.

From the very earliest beginnings of the *Cantos* there would appear to have been a tension between two quite different poetic models: the Dantescan dream vision and the Homeric sea journey. Pound opted for the sea journey in the 1925 *Draft of XVI Cantos*, and kept to that journey as his main structural model until the *Pisan Cantos* (1948). But even before the unforeseen events which led to the *Pisan Cantos*, Pound had begun to speak of the forthcoming conclusion to his epic in Dantescan terms—as in the opening quotation. The reason for this is that, despite the Homeric structural model, Pound always conceived of his poem as a comedy, that is, that like comedy it would conclude with difficulties overcome, puzzles resolved, and the promise of a new world.

Of course Pound was not unaware of the difficulties inherent in what amounts to a marriage of history and romance; but he was unable to arrive at a satisfactory resolution of the problem. He

[1] "An Introduction to the Economic Nature of the United States," in *Impact*, ed. Noel Stock (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960), p. 15. The Italian translates: "among the masters of those who know." Dante sees Aristotle in limbo and identifies him only as "*'l maestro di color che sanno*" (*Inferno*, IV, 131).

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pressed on with composition and publication, merely taking the precaution of labeling the first two sections "draft." Only when the poem was so well advanced that he had once again to address his mind to the problem of bringing it to the required prosperous conclusion, did he begin testily to complain about his lack of "an Aquinas map," and the inappropriateness of a "stage set à la Dante" to the modern world, as if he had been writing a *commedia* all along; when, in fact, none of his readers had supposed him to be writing anything of the sort.

With the *Pisan Cantos* Pound returns to the lyric mode, reformulating and restructuring the poem as he does so. The *Pisan Cantos*, as Hugh Kenner has observed, are a reprise of the entire poem up to that point.[2] And, although this section abounds in Odyssean references, the reprise reformulates the poem as a Dantescan subjective lyric, apparently abandoning the model of the Homeric historical epic which had produced the dreary Chinese and Adams sections. In other words, the *Pisan Cantos* take us back to the kind of poem envisioned in 1917:

> I have but smelt this life, a whiff of it—
> The box of scented wood
> Recalls cathedrals. And shall I claim;
> Confuse my own phantastikon,
> Or say the filmy shell that circumscribes me
> Contains the actual sun;
> confuse the thing I see
> With actual gods behind me?
> Are they gods behind me?
> How many worlds we have! If Botticelli
> Brings her ashore on that great cockle-shell—
> His Venus (Simonetta?),
> And Spring and Aufidus fill all the air
> With their clear-outlined blossoms?
> World enough.[3]

It is just such a visionary world, dominated by the "phantastikon" or subjective reality of the poet, that we inhabit in the *Pisan Cantos*, and Venus in her cockle-shell is the touchstone of that world:

[2] Hugh Kenner, "Under the Larches of Paradise," in *Gnomon* (New York: McDowell Oblensky, 1958), pp. 286-7. First published in THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. IX, No. 3 (Autumn, 1956).

[3] "Three Cantos: I," *Poetry*, X (1917), pp. 120-121.

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a man on whom the sun has gone down
the ewe, he said had such a pretty look in her eyes;
and the nymph of the Hagoromo came to me,
as a corona of angels
one day were clouds banked on Taishan
or in glory of sunset
and tovarish blessed without aim
wept in the rainditch at evening
Sunt lumina
that the drama is wholly subjective
stone knowing the form which the carver imparts it
the stone knows the form
sia Cythera, sia Ixotta, sia in Santa Maria dei Miracoli
where Pietro Romano has fashioned the bases
OY TIN
a man on whom the sun has gone down.[4]

Aphrodite, by which name Pound most commonly identifies the goddess, is a highly ambiguous figure in the *Pisan Cantos*. She is deliberately confused with Artemis and Persephone—becoming rather like Robert Graves' three-personed White Goddess. But she does appear in her cockle-shell à la Botticelli:

with the mast held by the left hand
in this air as of Kuanon
enigma forgetting the times and seasons
but this air brought her ashore a la marina
with the great shell borne on the seawaves
nautilis biancastra
By no means an orderly Dantescan rising
but as the winds veer. (74/21; 443)

As in the earlier passage where the subjective Pound merged himself with the objective and historical Odysseus, here the visionary and subjective Aphrodite is merged with the objective and historical *periplus* which the *Cantos* have been. She is not "brought ashore" as she was in "Canto One," but is buffeted by the winds, mirroring in her birth the uncertain and arduous path of the poem itself: "by no means an orderly Dantescan rising."

[4] *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1948), Canto 74, p. 8. Subsequent references will follow the quotation thus, (74/8; 430): representing Canto number/page number 1948 or 1955 edition; page number 1972 edition.

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Rock Drill,[5] the next section after the *Pisan Cantos*, continues the transformation of an historical epic into a subjective lyric already well begun in the *Pisan Cantos*. True, at first the reader believes himself to have been plunged once more, and even more deeply, into the disorderly welter of Poundian history. The first two cantos of the section are an impenetrable mixture of Chinese, Latin, French, and a little English, with occasional marginal notes referring the reader to "Couvreur's Chou King".[6] The reader recognizes with a sigh of resignation that he is once again being exposed to Chinese history, but without Couvreur can understand little more. Canto 87 is rather more like the *Pisan Cantos*, but 88 and 89 lead us once again into the tangle of American history—this time via T. H. Benton's *Thirty Year's View*.[7] Readers of the poem have been here before, and may well wonder at the apparent failure to build on what had been achieved in the *Pisan Cantos* in favor of a return to historical ground which had already been tediously traversed.

The lyric voice is finally encountered once again in Canto 90 of *Rock-Drill:*

> from under the rubble heap
> m'elevasti
> from the dulled edge beyond pain,
> m'elevasti
> out of Erebus, the deep-lying
> from the wind under the earth,
> m'elevasti (90/66; 606)

This lambent voice speaking of an emergence from rubble and inconscience must surely announce the beginning of the ascent into a paradiso[8]—an expectation which is reinforced by the following

[5] Ezra Pound, *Rock-Drill, 85-95 de los cantares* (London: Faber & Faber, 1955).

[6] This book gives the Chinese text of the *Chou King*, the Chinese history classic, together with translations into both French and Latin, and marginal notes in French. Couvreur also provides a transliteration of the Chinese characters into their alphabetical equivalents. Such a work would obviously fascinate a man with Pound's interest in lexical metaphor. S. Couvreur, S. J., *Chou King* (Sien Hsien: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique, 1934).

[7] T. H. Benton, *Thirty Year's View* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1854), 2 Vols.

[8] Hugh Kenner, for one, states that the "lyric Paradiso" begins here in Canto 90 (*op. cit.*, p. 293).

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light and water imagery and the metamorphosis of tree into stone—ideograms of some kind of paradisal world established in Cantos 2, 4, and 20. Certainly we have emerged from the repetitive round of history into a bright, subjective, pastoral world. But the next-to-final passage of Canto 90 repeats the motif of ascension with allusions that give rise to some uncertainty about the purely paradisal nature of the world into which one is emerging:

> out of Erebus, the delivered,
> Tyro, Alcmene, free now, ascending
> e i cavalieri,
> ascending,
> no shades more,
> lights among them, enkindled,
> and the dark shade of courage
> 'Electra
> bowed still with the wrongs of Aegisthus.
> Trees die and the dream remains. (90/68-9; 608-609)

Both these passages descriptive of ascension allude to Canto 1 through the phrase "out of Erebus." Canto 1 is, of course, a translation of the Homeric *nekuia* or calling forth of the dead (*Odyssey*, XI). When Odysseus pours blood into the ditch he has dug, there arise

> Souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead, of brides
> Of youths and of the old who had borne much;
> Souls stained with recent tears, girls tender,
> Men many, mauled with bronze lance heads
> Battle spoil bearing yet dreory arms,
> These many crowded about me. (1/3-4)

In Canto 1 the souls are in no sense ascending into a paradise. They are merely shades, "the impetuous, impudent dead" in Pound's phrase. In Canto 90 they are "no shades more"; they are delivered, "free now, ascending." Clearly it is an escape from death that is being described, but it would appear to be an escape into a world which contains "the dark shade of courage" and "Electra,/ bowed

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still with the wrongs of Aegisthus," that is to say, into a world far short of heavenly bliss.

The two women, "free now" and "ascending," Tyro and Alcmene, are two of the shades to whom Odysseus spoke in the Underworld. Tyro is given a place of honor in Canto 2 where Poseidon's watery rape of her is described, but Alcmene is not mentioned before the *Pisan Cantos:*

between NEKUIA where are Alcmene and Tyro
and the Charybdis of action
to the solitude of Mt. Taishan
femina, femina, that wd/not be dragged into paradise by the hair, under the gray cliff in periplum
the sun dragging her stars
a man on whom the sun has gone down. (74/9; 431)

Both women are "brides" of gods although themselves mortals; both of them, then, have as it were tasted of paradise although they are in the Underworld. Although raped by gods, they have remained in the world of mortals because they were unable or unwilling to join the gods in paradise: "femina, femina, that wd/ not be dragged into paradise by the hair."

That motif of ascension is continued in Canto 91 together with unmistakable allusions to Aphrodite:

that the body of light come forth
from the body of fire
And that your eyes come to the surface
from the deep wherein they were sunken,
Reina—for 300 years
and now sunken
That your eyes come forth from their caves
& light then
as the holly-leaf
qui laborat, orat
Thus Undine came to the rock,
by Circeo
and the stone eyes again looking seaward
(91/70; 610)

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Careful readers of the poem will recognize the expression, "by Circeo/ and the stone eyes again looking seaward," as Aphrodite's signature. It first occurs in Canto 39: "With the Goddess' eyes to seaward/ By Circeo, by Terracina, with the stone eyes/ white toward the sea." The eyes are those of a statue of Venus which once stood on the cliffs at Terracina, and whose restoration symbolizes for Pound the reintegration of human society. "Given the material means," he once wrote, "I would replace the statue of Venus on the cliffs of Terracina."[9] Reina, or "the Queen," rises from the sea like Aphrodite herself, although her rising would appear to be a rebirth like that of Tyro and Alcmene, on the model of Persephone—but from the sea rather than from underground.

Apollonius of Tyana, the next figure introduced in the passage: "Thus Apollonius/ (if it was Apollonius)," was a First-Century sage and miracle worker whom some put forward as a rival to Christ. He is an important, new hero in *Rock-Drill* who, as a Pythagorean and sun worshipper, ate no meat, disapproved of blood sacrifice, and wore clothes of pure linen only, not permitting animal skins or fabrics to touch his own skin. Pound's principal source for his treatment of Apollonius is F. C. Conybeare's Loeb translation of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.[10] Apollonius is particularly interesting because he has been everywhere that the *Cantos* have been. As reported in Philostratus' *Life*, he travels extensively throughout the ancient world (like Odysseus); he advises kings and emperors (as Pound imagined himself to be advising dictators and presidents); and (again like Pound) he is arrested and charged with treason—on two occasions, once by Nero and again by Domitian.

Apollonius is introduced into the poem as a lone male mortal in the company of ascending goddesses and mortal women. Clearly he must somehow partake of this ascension although he is a mortal and a man; in other words Apollonius is part of the uncertain movement into "paradise"—is perhaps one who has attained whatever degree of paradisal repose is available in the *Cantos*. Cer-

[9] Ezra Pound, "Credo," *Front*, I (Dec. 1930), p. 11.

[10] Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, with an English translation by F. C. Conybeare, 2 Vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1912). Hugh Kenner is the only scholar thus far to have given this work any attention, as he does with characteristic brilliance in "Under the Larches of Paradise," *loc. cit.*

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tainly his recurrence on the next page is in the midst of imagery associated with theophany of Aphrodite:

> Light & the flowing crystal
> never gin in cut glass had such clarity
> That Drake saw the splendour and wreckage
> in that clarity
> Gods moving in crystal
> ichor, amor
> Secretary of Nature, J. Heydon.
> Here Apollonius, Heydon
> hither Ocellus.

Despite the fact that they are gods, not goddesses, "moving in crystal," this passage inescapably echoes that in Canto 23 where Aphrodite appears to Anchises, the father of Aeneas, disguised as the daughter of Otreus:

> "Huh! tet. . ." said Anchises,
> "well, they've made a bloody mess of that city."
> "King Otreus, of Phrygia,
> "That king is my father."
> and saw then, as of waves taking form,
> As the sea, hard, a glitter of crystal,
> And the waves rising but formed, holding their form.
> No light reaching through them. (23/109)

As the "groom" of a goddess, Anchises is the male analogue of Tyro and Alcmene, "brides" of gods. Those women are "free now, ascending." Apollonius, like Drake, may be supposed to have seen "the splendour and wreckage/ in that clarity."

Pound has said that he "was not following the three divisions of the Divine Comedy exactly. One can't follow the Dantesquan cosmos in an age of experiment. But I have made the division between people dominated by emotion, people struggling upwards, and those who have some part of the divine vision."[11] Apollonius is one of those who have had "some part of the divine vision." He is, perhaps, one of *"i maestri di color che sanno,"* one of the masters of those who know.

[11] "Ezra Pound: An Interview," *Paris Review*, 28 (Summer-Fall, 1962), 48-9.

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But Apollonius does not lie with a goddess like Anchises or Odysseus. His vision of paradise is of a different nature and is achieved in a different manner. With him we encounter a third *nekuia* unlike that of Canto I, and also unlike the personal, memorious *nekuia* of the *Pisan Cantos:*

> That he passed the night on the mound of Achilles
> "master of tempest and fire"
> & he set up Palamedes
> an image that I, Philostratus, saw
> and a shrine that will hold ten people drinking.
> "It was not by ditch-digging and sheep's-guts . . .
> "in Aeolis close to Methymna"
> in the summer lightning, close upon cock-crow.[12]
>
> (94/98; 638)

Apollonius' *nekuia* is effortless and without either violence or fear, "it was not by ditch-digging and sheep's-guts." Odysseus visits the dead in order to learn of his fate and how he may return home and restore Ithaca. He learns what he needs to know and does return home, but only after a perilous and uncertain journey. Apollonius,

[12] In this passage Pound draws on Philostratus, Vol. I, Bk. IV, Chapters XI-XVI. In the following account I underline those parts echoed or repeated in the passage cited from the *Cantos.*

Apollonius and his company stop off at Troy on their way from Ephesus to Athens. Apollonius announces his intention to pass a night alone on the mound of Achilles in order to have converse with him (p. 367). In Chapter XIII we are told that many people rushed to board Apollonius' ship "for it was already autumn and the sea was not much to be trusted. They all regarded Apollonius as one who was *master of the tempest and of fire* and of perils of all sorts, and so wished to go on board with him . . ." (p. 371).

In the same chapter Apollonius tells them to sail "towards *the country of Aeolians*, which lies over against Lesbos, *and then to turn as close as he could to Methymna*, and there to cast anchor" (p. 373). It is there that Achilles has told Apollonius that Palamedes is buried.

Philostratus continues, "They then had hardly leapt out of the ship, when he hit upon the tomb and found the statue buried beside it. And there were inscribed on the base of the statue the words: 'To the divine Palamedes.' *He accordingly set it up again in its place, as I myself saw;* and he raised a shrine around it of the size which the worshippers of the goddess of the crossways, called Enodia, use: for *it was large enough for ten persons at once to sit and drink* and keep good cheer in" (p. 373).

Finally, in Chapter XVI, Apollonius describes his conversation with Achilles. He begins by remarking, "Well, *it was not by digging a ditch* like Odysseus, *nor by tempting* souls with the blood of a sheep, that I obtained a conversation with Achilles" (p. 377). As a Pythagorean, Apollonius says, he does not believe that Achilles is dead, and so merely calls upon him to make an appearance.

Apollonius closes his account of the conversation by telling his audience that "Achilles vanished with a flash of *summer lightning, for indeed the cocks were already beginning their chant*" (p. 385).

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on the other hand, visits Achilles more out of respect than curiosity, and only incidentally learns of the neglect of Palamedes' tomb. Moreover, his restoration of Palamedes' statue—an act formally equivalent to Odysseus' restoration of Ithaca—is accomplished effortlessly and, in Philostratus' account, almost magically.

As a sage and miracle-worker—or wizard as his accusers called him—Apollonius is in the world, but not of it. This amphibious nature of the sage is never more clearly illustrated than in the incident of his arrest and trial for treason by the emperor Domitian. He submits himself to arrest, and comes to Rome to plead his case. Philostratus copiously reports the eloquent defence which reduces the accusers to silence. But at the end of it all Apollonius says to the court, "For thou shalt not slay me, since I tell thee I am not mortal," and he magically vanishes.[13] Philostratus does not fail to draw the inference that however just his cause Apollonius could not hope to receive justice. Clearly the Roman Empire under Domitian is not paradise.[14]

Pound makes only one direct reference to the whole business of Apollonius' arrest and trial. As Apollonius is waiting to enter the courthouse, a secretary comes up to him and says, " 'Man of Tyana, you must enter the court with nothing on you.' 'Are we then to take a bath,' said Apollonius, 'or to plead?' "[15] This witticism appears without explanation in Canto 91:

> "Is this a bath-house?
> *allote d'aut' Euros Zephyrôi eixaske diôkein*
> "Or a Court House?"
> Asked Apollonius. (91/76; 616)

But despite the paucity of reference, this incident from Philostratus is a crucial one for both *Rock-Drill* and *Thrones*, because it is in the context of Apollonius' difficulties that Pound is directed by Philostratus to the episode of Leucothea in the *Odyssey*.

[13] The whole episode occupies pp. 195-283 of Vol. II. The quotation is from p. 283.

[14] Pound, in a manner characteristic of his late cryptic style, gives only two lines to indicate the character of Domitian's rule: "And that even in the time of Domitian / one young man declined to be buggar'd." This is a reference to an unnamed Arcadian youth who was thrown into prison for refusing to become Domitian's lover (II, pp. 263-5).

[15] Philostratus, II, p. 277.

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Leucothea is the sea nymph who rescues Odysseus in Book V after his boat has been wrecked in the storm. She is identified also as Ino, the daughter of Cadmus. She appears to Odysseus in the midst of the storm, and tells him to discard the gorgeous clothes given to him by Calypso and don instead her scarf (*kredemnon*), which will save him from drowning. He is instructed to return the scarf when he is safely ashore, and does so when, after much difficulty, he is thrown up exhausted on the Phaeacian coast.

Damis, a disciple of Apollonius, alludes to the Leucothea episode when he learns that Apollonius is to be charged with treason and wizardry. It is only by some such divine intervention, Damis believes, that Apollonius can possibly escape an unhappy fate:

> Now I am ready to believe that Leucothea did really give her veil to Odysseus, after he had fallen out of his ship and was paddling himself over the sea with his hands. For we are reduced to just as awful and impossible a plight, when some god, as it seems to me, stretches out his hand over us, that we fall not away from all hope of salvation.[16]

Beside this passage the Loeb edition gives a reference to *Odyssey*, V, 333, where Leucothea is introduced as daughter of Cadmus (*Kadmou Thugater*). The Greek line in the passage cited above from Canto 91 is *Odyssey*, V, 332, describing the buffeting of Odysseus' boat by the East and West winds. Taking the hint from Philostratus, Pound develops the Leucothea episode as a paradigm for his uncertain *paradiso*.[17]

[16] Philostratus, II, 211.

[17] Since Leucothea is a new figure in the *Cantos* and is referred to on a number of occasions in both *Rock-Drill* and *Thrones*, she has drawn a good deal of critical attention. Hugh Kenner's review-article, "Under the Larches of Paradise"—already mentioned more than once—was the first to draw attention to her. Kenner returns to Leucothea in an article focussing on Pound's lexical technique, "Leucothea's Bikini: Mimetic Homage," in *Perspectives*, ed. Noel Stock (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1965), pp. 25-40. K. L. Goodwin has written a comprehensive discussion of her occurrence in *Rock-Drill* and *Thrones*, "The Structure of Ezra Pound's Later Cantos," *Southern Review*, IV (1971), 300-307. For some reason Goodwin makes no reference to Kenner's two earlier articles. The best and most complete discussion of Leucothea is to be found in Christine Brooke-Rose's recent book, *A ZBC of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), (especially pp. 138-156). Brooke-Rose builds upon Kenner's two articles.

None of these discussions notes the reference to the Leucothea episode in Philostratus, nor do any of them read the episode in the context of Pound's reformulation of his paradisal motif in the later cantos.

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Leucothea first appears just before Apollonius' bath-house joke. She is placed in the context of light which surrounds the ubiquitous and deliquescent goddess of these cantos:

> (to the tough guy Musonius: honour)
> Rose, azure,
> the lights slow moving round her,
> Zephyrus, turning,
> the petals light on the air.
> Bright hawk whom no hood shall chain,
> They who are skilled in fire
> shall read tan the dawn.
> Waiving no jot of the arcanum
> (having his own mind to stand by him)
> As the sea-gull *Kadmou thugater* said to Odysseus
> KADMOU THUGATER
> "get rid of parapernalia"
> TLEMOUSUNE. (91/75; 615)

Leucothea is a lesser analogue of Aphrodite herself. Her appearance to Odysseus amounts to a form of salvation, but it is clearly not equivalent to entry into paradise. The last word of the passage cited, *Tlemousune* ("misery," "endurance")—which does not occur in the local context of either Homer or Philostratus—is a reminder that Odysseus has still to endure many hours of pain and uncertainty in the storm-tossed sea before he will be thrown up, half-dead, on the Phaeacian coast. A divinity stretches out her hand to Odysseus, but he does not thereby transcend the pain and suffering of the "Charybdis of action."

Apollonius scolds Damis for being so faint-hearted as to expect divine intervention, such as Odysseus' rescue by Leucothea:

> How long will you continue to cherish these fears, as if you could never understand that wisdom amazes all that is sensible of her, but is herself not amazed by anything?[18]

And he is not moved by Damis' sensible reply that Domitian "is quite insensible, and . . . not only cannot be amazed by us, but

[18] Philostratus, II, p. 213.

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would not allow anything in the world to amaze him." Yet in the event Apollonius follows the route of Odysseus when confronted with overwhelming and insensible worldly forces by causing himself to disappear from the courtroom.

Perhaps chastened by his own experience, Pound's view seems to be closer to the more sensible, if less noble, fear of Damis than to the contemptuous courage of Apollonius. Indeed in the *Pisan Cantos* he turned, like Damis, to the *Odyssey* for comfort and guidance. He speaks first of Odysseus' attack on the Cicones, and its unhappy consequences for him:

> care and craft in forming leagues and alliances
> that avail nothing against the decree
> the folly of attacking that island
> and of the force *hypermoron*[19]

and continues with an allusion to Odysseus' shipwreck:

> Je suis au bout de mes forces/
> That from the gates of death,
> . . . . . .
> hast'ou swum in a sea of air strip
> through an aeon of nothingness,
> when the raft broke and the waters went over me.
> (80/90-91; 512-513)

At Pisa Pound saw himself as the storm-tossed Odysseus, having lost all companions. He does not mention Leucothea, but an anonymous goddess, possessing Aphrodite's eyes, does appear to him in Canto 81:

> there came new subtlety of eyes into my tent,
> whether of spirit or hypostasis,
> but what the blindfold hides

[19] *Pisan Cantos*, 80, p. 90 (512). The Greek phrase means "beyond what is destined" as in *Odyssey* I, 32-34: "Look you now, how ready mortals are to blame the gods. It is from us, they say, that evils come, but they even of themselves, through their own blind folly, have sorrows beyond *that which is ordained*" (Loeb translation).

Pound thought that "the perfectly useless, trifling, unprovoked sack of the Cicones" gave the *Odyssey* "a crime and punishment motif" (Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays*, ed. T. S. Eliot [London: Faber and Faber, 1954], p. 212).

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or at carneval
nor any pair showed anger
Saw but the eyes and stance between the eyes,
colour, diastasis,
careless or unaware it had not the
whole tent's room
nor was place for the full *Eidous* [knowing]
. . . . . .
First came the seen, then thus the palpable
Elysium, though it were in the halls of hell,
What thou lovest well is thy true heritage.
(81/98-99; 520-521)

Some divinity (for Pound as for Odysseus) stretches out her hand so that the sufferer fall not away from all hope of salvation, even in the midst of adversity: "Elysium, though it were in the halls of hell."

The remission from the struggle granted to Pound in his tent at Pisa is not so much paradisal as ecstatic. The paradisal motif in the later cantos never escapes this paradigm of the ecstatic moment, the moment of theophany, or of metamorphosis. It is a moment fugitive, ungraspable, and unrelated to mundane matters such as pain or well-being, death or life. The sage Apollonius represents, perhaps, one who has absorbed the *eidous* of the ecstatic moment, and has thus become immune to the dangers and vagaries of this world.

However, Pound does not show us Apollonius' miraculous escape, thereby evading the desperate expedient of incorporating into his poem a miraculous and unbelievable ascension into paradise. Instead he invokes "the tough guy, Musonius," another sage who ran afoul of the state. Musonius is first mentioned in Canto 91 in the passage cited above alluding to Leucothea. Philostratus tells us that:

> Musonius of Babylon, a man only second to Apollonius, was thrown into prison for the crime of being a sage, and there lay in danger of death; and he would have died for all his gaoler cared, if it had not been for the strength of his constitution.[20]

[20] Philostratus, I, 431.

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Unlike Apollonius, Musonius does not escape his imprisonment by magic. He suffers the hardships of prison, and (like Pound at Pisa and St. Elizabeth's) survives them only because of the strength of his constitution and confidence in the rectitude of his own actions and beliefs. It is Musonius whom we find, in apposition with Leucothea's advice to Odysseus, "(having his own mind to stand by him)." Pound's phrase echoes a letter Musonius wrote from prison to Apollonius:

> For your solicitude on my behalf, I shall never do anything but commend you: but he who has strength of mind to defend himself, and has proved that he has done no wrong, is a true man.[21]

Musonius would appear to have little to do with ecstasy or paradise, condemned as he is to labor at digging a canal to join the Aegean and Adriatic seas. There is no miraculous escape for him, no god stretching out his hand, not even "a subtlety of eyes." But, like Odysseus, he endures. It is to him as much as to Odysseus that the epithet *"tlemousune"* applies; and it is he who answers the question Pound poses at the end of Canto 93: "Without guides, having nothing but courage/ Shall audacity last into fortitude?" He also provides an ironic commentary on Apollonius' pious reminder that "the whole earth affords secure ground for the doers of holiness, and that the sea is safely traversed not only by people in ships but even by people attempting to swim."[22] Pound picks this up in Canto 94 where he quotes Philostratus' Greek and provides his own translation (characteristically the Greek is incomplete and unintelligible by itself):

> *de tois hosia prattousi*
> for the doers of holiness
> *gên men pasan asphalê*
> they may ship or swim, being secure.
> We have already raised our stele to Musonius,
> the man with the spade.
> (94/98-99; 638-639)

[21] Philostratus, I, 461.
[22] Philostratus, I, 501-503.

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Apollonius would appear to be one who travels dry and comfortable in a ship, Odysseus one who is forced to swim, and Musonius one whose security resides only in Stoic indifference to misfortune.

Musonius serves to remind us, even more unequivocally than Odysseus, that despite the announcements of ascension, despite the recurrent and bewildering theophanies, despite the pastoral imagery and the metamorphic play of light and water which irradiate Canto 90 and following, the reader is not being led out of Purgatory into Paradise as in the *Divine Comedy*. Rather he is being led out of the world of effective action into a world of sensitive awareness, out of history into contemplation, out of *periplus* into vision, out of epic into lyric. But the lyric world of vision and contemplation does not, in the *Cantos*, transcend the world of action; it merely interpenetrates, providing a momentary remission from pain:

> Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel
> but is jagged
> For a flash,
> for an hour.
> Then agony,
> then an hour,
> then agony,
> Hilary stumbles, but the Divine Mind is abundant
> unceasing
> *improvisatore*
> Omniformis
> unstill.
>
> (92/80; 620)

In the middle of his borrowings from Philostratus in Canto 94 Pound quotes himself in an intriguing little passage that is intended, I think, to direct us to the Leucothea episode as the touchstone for his paradisal theme:

> So that walking here under the larches of Paradise
> the stream was exceedingly clear
> & almost level its margin
> "was thrown in my way a touch-stone
> *gar basanos katharon kai ap'oudenos thnêtou.*"
>
> (94/98; 638)

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The speaker of the first three lines must be Pound himself. (Is he perhaps picking up the enigmatic "So that:" with which he concluded Canto I so many pages and years ago?) The phrase "under the larches of Paradise" is from "The Alchemist: Chant for the Transmutation of Metals" written for *Ripostes,* but not published until 1920. In that poem many dead women are invoked by name to arise and aid in the transmutation of metals:

> Out of Erebus, the flat-lying breadth,
> Breadth that is stretched out beneath the world:
> Out of Erebus, out of the flat waste of air, lying
> beneath the world;
> Out of the brown leaf-brown colourless
> Bring the imperceptible cool.[23]

These women, dwelling in Erebus, are said to move "under the larches of Paradise," as if in "The Alchemist" Erebus, the upper reaches of the Underworld, were identified with the Elysian Fields. The clear, level stream, however, is not found in "The Alchemist"; it reminds one of the clear stream in Dante's Earthly Paradise (*Purgatorio,* XXVIII).[24]

Whether the paradise named in these lines be thought to be Erebus, the Elysian Fields, the Earthly Paradise, or Heaven, the reader is being informed unequivocally that the locus of the speaker is Paradise, and that while walking there a touchstone was thrown in his way. The fourth line of the passage is in quotation marks because it is Apollonius, not Pound, speaking. Learning that he must go to Rome to face charges of treason—brought against him by Nero this time—Apollonius receives the news as a blessing:

> Well, of all the blessings which have been vouchsafed to me by the gods . . . this present one, I may say, is the greatest that I have ever enjoyed; for chance has thrown in my way a touchstone to test these young men. . . .[25]

[23] Ezra Pound, *Personae* (New York: New Direction, n.d.), p. 76.

[24] There are a number of allusions in *Rock-Drill* to *Purgatorio,* XXVIII, just as there are a number of allusions to the *Paradiso* and the *Inferno.* In themselves they do nothing to fix the nature of Pound's "paradiso." The opening lines of Canto 92 echo *Purgatorio,* XXVIII, ll. 109-120. And the last half-line of Canto 93 is from the same canto (l. 29) where Dante says that Matilda reminds him of Proserpine.

[25] Philostratus, I, 435.

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It turns out that twenty-six of Apollonius' followers are of false metal: they decline to accompany him to Rome.

The final, Greek line would translate: "for a pure touchstone [made] from no dead matter." It too is Apollonius speaking, but the line is a pastiche, the first two words taken from the passage on page 435 cited above, and the rest from page 444 where Apollonius is speaking of his clothing, which he says is pure because it is not made from dead matter, that is, animal skins or fibres, but is of linen.

Since the touchstone turns out to be Apollonius' linen garments, it is tempting to identify it with Leucothea's injunction to Odysseus, "get rid of parapernalia," that is, "discard the gorgeous garments of Calypso and take my veil." She is heard repeating the advice after Apollonius' witticism about entering the courthouse naked:

> Apollonius unpolluted
> and the whole creation concerned with "FOUR"
> "my bikini is worth your raft"
>
> (91/76; 616)

Leucothea reveals to Pound that "a stage set à la Dante" is not needed for his "paradiso," that he can go naked like Odysseus, though tossed by the storms of life, and still be thrown up on the further shore: "for the doers of holiness / they may ship or swim, being secure."

Leucothea also permits Pound to unite the Odyssean plot with his subjective lyric by transforming Odysseus from the resourceful conqueror of Polyphemus and Circe to the pious supplicant of Leucothea. Odysseus' rescue by Leucothea is a paradigm of the paradisal possibilities in the *Cantos*, the goddess appears but briefly in the midst of Hell, and then disappears:

> "Unhappy man, how is it that Poseidon, the earthshaker, has conceived such furious wrath against thee, that he is sowing for thee the seeds of many evils? Yet verily he shall not utterly destroy thee for all his rage. Nay, do thou thus; and methinks thou dost not lack understanding. Strip off these garments, and leave thy raft to be driven by the winds, but do thou swim with they hands and so strive to reach the land of the Phaeacians, where it is thy fate to escape.

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Come, take this veil, and stretch it beneath thy breast. It is immortal; there is no fear that thou shalt suffer aught or perish. But when with thy hands thou hast laid hold of the land, loose it from thee, and cast it into the wine-dark sea far from the land, and thyself turn away."

So saying, the goddess gave him the veil, and herself plunged again into the surging deep, like a sea-mew; and the dark wave hid her.[26]

Pound closes *Rock-Drill* with this incident:

That the wave crashed, whirling the raft, then
Tearing the oar from his hand,
broke mast and yard-arm
And he was drawn down under wave,
The wind tossing,
Notus, Boreas,
as it were thistle-down.
Then Leucothea had pity,
"mortal once
Who now is a sea-god:
nostou
gaiês Phaiêkôn [to reach Phaeacia]. (95/107; 647)

These lines "rhyme" with the theophany of Aphrodite in Canto 74:

enigma forgetting the times and seasons
but this air brought her ashore a la marina
with the great shell borne on the seawaves
nautilis biancastra
By no means an orderly Dantescan rising
but as the winds veer
tira libeccio
now Genji at Suma , tira libeccio
as the winds veer and the raft is driven
(74/21; 443)

[26] *Odyssey*, V, 11. 339-353. Loeb translation.

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The *Cantos* might well have ended with the theophany of Leucothea since it brings Odysseus as close to Ithaca as he can possibly get in our age, nor can there be any orderly Dantescan rising into the resplendent paraphernalia of a Paradiso. Of course, the poem does not end here, but Odysseus does not reappear in *Thrones* or *Drafts & Fragments* except in connection with Leucothea. His story is finished, and the paradisal motif too is concluded. *Thrones* for the most part concerns itself with the elaboration of laws for Pound's ideal city—although there are scattered allusions back to the paradisal formulations in *Rock-Drill* and the *Pisan Cantos*.

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NAOMI LAZARD

The Pilot

You say you are a pilot on a dangerous mission.
Night after night you have to make the run
from one beleaguered city to another,
flying through enemy flak, the red and orange
bursts, the air shuddering and tilting.
Those experts manning the anti-aircraft
are incredible sharp-shooters.

Just a few nights ago your plane was hit.
Only your courage, your daring and expertise,
brought the old crate in.
And all the crew was safe.

I understand about your terrible work,
how much it takes out of you,
the nightmares that scream in your sleep.
I sympathize with your burden of responsibility
for the out-dated crate you must fly,
and the crew. I've even grown to admire
that despot, the sour-faced navigator
without whom, as you've told me
with characteristic modesty,
you might never make it.

I know you are a hero.
I know these flights are genuinely frightening.
I know they take your breath away
and make you speechless. I know your silences
are a burden to you; sometimes
you are suddenly stricken by one of them.
Then you sit there, your mouth locked
in the open position, locked like your plane
zooming down with the throttle all the way

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forward, in order to ride with the plunge
through the sound barrier.

Because of all this I want to make it easy
for you. This is the way it works.
It isn't necessary to say anything.
With this code I've invented,
if you love me, just tap one time
with a finger or a foot.

The Road

It's been a long time since we missed
the turning. The road is dividing
everywhere, the hills are becoming
bleaker. The back of your head is tense
with watching for the signs, your hands
on the wheel are tight. You have lost
your humor. I won't say, "I told you
this would happen." I won't say,
"Let me take over." I am not encouraged
by your profile. If I had a song
left in me I would sing it.
But you don't want a song. I can tell
by your eyelids that you are disgusted.

I am following you in another car.
It is the worst time for driving, just
between twilight and night. Everything
I've learned is no use to me.
Your car is eating up the road
and spitting it back to me.
Small animals keep darting out
from the bushes, my headlights
are reflected in their terrified
eyes. "Go back!" I scream.
"This is no place for you!"

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The night is furious with us
and sends down rain to make us feel
like beggars. We are sitting in a diner
having a cup of coffee. "Where
are we going?" you ask. I was about
to answer, "I thought you knew," or
"We are going to Ithaca," but I think
better of it. Instead I say,
"We are going to your mother's grave.
We will grieve for all of us.
Everything will be all right."

The Autumn Wastes

after Tu Fu

Under my window the muddy river slogs on,
In its brown ringlets the sky falls down
At midday. Too early to sleep or too late,
All night I have not slept and at dawn
Crept out to the swimming blue tiles
On the balcony to see the sun awash there.
Morning is the best time, before I remember
How I have nourished hope like a sickly child.

Slowly dressing for a walk to the center,
Easily mistaken for somebody else but never
For the one I would have been. That memory
Murmurs inside of me: her face peeks
Over my shoulder in the mirror.
She was my youth.
She has not survived this summer. I don't know.
I should buy a cane or hob-nailed boots
To walk upright or make the gesture.

Coffee with milk, brown bread and butter.
Long mornings marching uphill, a few letters

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To answer if I'm lucky. Before the hours
Get grey, showing me how well I've fitted
Myself into small places. Sun on my hand
Like the frank of life, I created this room
With love; now it's more like the edge of a cliff
Reeling over the river. I watch the cats sleep.

The autumn vines continue to grow, thick
And dark along the walls. It is I who cannot
Make things grow in my own life. There are very
Few destinations left on the road I have taken.
It is not only that; there is also the peach pit
Lying under my heart that stops me
From swallowing my life. Will this be my last
Moment, my last cry as a small bird flies upward?

Ambulatory patients all, I see us crowding
These streets. And feel the need of the iron
Bed myself, the white enclosing walls.
Doctors and priests are here with the rest of us,
Working round the clock simply to stay
Afloat. I've tried everything except madness.
Now I surrender to the birds
Who take me under their wings wherever they go.

Letter/March 1974

My dearest sister,
It is a cornflower afternoon;
The year has gone around again.
This is another anniversary
Of singing fish and dreams of fireflies.

Friends are here to help me bear it.
How our lives stretch back of us,
Banners like ships riding

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On a sea of faces. Between the deaths
And all the other separations,

An orange light lifts me beyond
Myself sometimes. Other times, not.
Darling sister, what did you have in your mind
When you moved to that other country?
I've had to carve out my own voyages,

And all the time I thought
We were to be together in the end.
The end is not so far away now;
It is beckoning to me, just around the corner.
I see our last house standing

Where it should be, surrounded by forest,
Filled with the sounds of our animals.
We must hurry or it will be too late
If we are to have any of it. Hurry,
Dear sister, the cats are hungry,

The dogs need their exercise. The forest
Animals are waiting for us, the foxes
Are in danger. Young deer are being slaughtered
For lack of our presence. Why wait
Until we are hags and can't run

With the little ones? It will be good
For the children, learning to nourish
The living. I say enough of this ruination;
No to this life that has no center.
Don't wait any longer. This

Is the true wilderness, the world
Turning dark. Send me your answer.
I want to run and tell the young birches
We are coming.

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STEPHEN BERG

For My Father

AT THE DOOR

Black trees. The banks fill with shadow.
Where the roadlamps throw their blue light
on the water, it's alive.
We drive by without speaking.
Everything is so peaceful outside,
and inside, that the deep endless laugh
of a man who has found happiness begins
and I remember my daughters coming up to me
and smiling, saying whatever they wanted to
without fear.
This is enough. Give everything else
to the hungry.
They say each person has a story
but that's not true.
We live.
The leaves are so dark tonight I can't see them
but I feel them breathe,
the river's moving on but all I see
are wrinkled patches of blue light, squirming.
My father's dying.
He's asleep now next to my mother as the car plows through.
She sits and waits.
I stick my arm out the window
and let it be a wing.
I know what to do.

TO THE SAME PLACE

The first warm summer afternoon I ask my friend
to ride out with his two daughters and me.
We park by the river.
Everybody's there, cooking, dozing, biking,

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playing ball. We get out and look for shade
and sit under a huge cherry tree.
I envy the steady unpredictable growth
that has taken everything and survived,
I pick at the tiny lumps that have pushed through
the papery brownish-pink bark that glows.
Then, knowing there's no escape from grief,
I pick up the whiffle ball and we catch—
curves, knucklers, floaters, anything we can
get going on the clear air, and slowly again
the peace I felt
when we drove past this place nights ago
spreads through me.
Now his children crawl on the low branches, screaming.
They jump down and scoop handfuls of parched dirt
and carry it to us.
How much is left?
The dusty grains flare out through their fingers
and Jeff points out how small the young cherries are
this early, not ready to eat,
and squeezes one
until its juice stains his fingers.
The branch snaps back.
The children want to eat them.
That's how it is, wanting to eat green cherries,
getting sick. But fathers protect us,
we think, until they die.
Then we stand on the earth
in front of our children, fathers ourselves,
and the bitter taste of love sings on our tongues.

DRIVING OUT AGAIN AT NIGHT

A full moon tilts over the lawns and trees.
Pale shadows, pockets of heat,
couples humped along the riverbanks,
these and the invisible road cure me.
The arclights are out for miles.
I still carry you inside me, Dad, one hundred

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and thirteen extra pounds, gray-faced and weak,
but out here the smell
of water and leaves fills me and pushes you out.
I'm sorry. I love you. But I have to let you go.
So we drive away again
into a few blurred things,
my friend and I, talking.
When cars rush by us they blind me
and I like not seeing. We turn left
over the bridge to come back
and a couple dances across the road, caught
in our beams, the boy holding a brown
paper bag with a bottle in it.
Its mouth flashes.
On my left the river is as clear as a baby's eyes.
When I look toward the stretches of grass, soaked in darkness,
sweeping by, I see myself twenty years ago
lying there with a girl
and pound the dashboard with my fist.
Back in the city
the lights on floor after floor of offices stay on.
Nobody's there. The last
shoppers pause at the frozen bodies that shine
in store windows then straggle home
to a silence nothing explains.

RED WEED

next to me on the riverbank,
I pluck you out of the dirt,
I hold you
between two fingers
because I'm alone.
I wish I could speak through the invisible
roots I have,
not through my face.
You don't have a face,
brown roots going nowhere,

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bloody spiked crown.
When I toss you
you sail a few inches
then fall onto the water
and drift away.
There's my father the morning I woke
and saw him. I see him
in me, eyes
open, mouth open,
drifting away.
He didn't wake.
The spot of blood he coughed up on the pillow's
you, red weed,
so tiny, so clear when I held you
up against the sky, so
wise not to answer, god
of the box of ashes,
father.

Dust

One last night under a pink sky
I sit near the river's edge alone.
Moths wobble through the grass,
wind is in the leaves and on the bleak river,
threatening rain. That's the smell I love best,
it blew down out of the sky into the gray afternoons
of my childhood, promising everything.
Now trees mottle the sky.
Cicadas drone their shrill tinny prayer,
not to anyone or anything in particular.
Grass, water, the dark, late
summer, the first brown leaves, blowing everywhere.
Father, mother and son
fish over the edge, the old woman's

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fuzzy white hair glows in the faint moonlight,
she whips her line back past her head and the weight
swings it around until it hisses and sails out and plops
into the torn water. The two men sit.
A rower pulls by, I listen
to the splashes of the oars
as if they're talking to me
as he fades back into the haze of distance.
Nobody. Quiet fish.
Arclights throb on the water.
I write, I don't care,
I could sleep out here, empty of us,
where the sharp horns of the young orange moon point left
at the city. Gone.
What's your face doing here, blanker
than the unlighted scowl of the moon?
No meaning, everything at peace.
Even the terrified, helpless eyes of my lost father
less than dust.

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B. H. FRIEDMAN

Moving in Place

for Jeanne and Fritz Bultman

My wife clutches my arm, digging her fingernails into the biceps, telling me thus forcefully but secretly—she doesn't want the real estate broker to know—that she likes the apartment, loves it (her nails dig deeper), lusts for it (deeper still). It is a grip I know well after twenty-five years of other apartments, vacation homes, the brownstone we have lived in during the last sixteen years. It is a grip that will not let go until the place is hers. It is also a grip I encourage—I don't pull my arm away. Now as in the past, I want to give her not just jewels, flowers, small tokens of affection, but whole environments, one larger than the next, to play with and possess.

Her message is already tattooed on my arm as, for the second time, from room to room we follow the broker, a pudgy but mobile middle-aged lady who seems to know the price, the maintenance, the special qualities of every co-operative apartment in the city. We listen to her describe what we see: "uncounted rooms"—entrance foyer and gallery, both terrazzo. "Banks no longer have the money for floors like those." She catches her breath. "Not to mention," she says mentioning, "the pantry, the laundry, the storage room—amenities no longer provided in your standard twelve-room co-op." She is excited by the bargain she is offering, reaches toward the ceiling. "Eleven feet throughout—double-hanging space in the closets, which would be rooms in the newer buildings. But you know what space is—you've lived in a house." She, too, lives in a house; she smiles complicitously.

We know what space *was*. Sixteen years ago. Before we noticed that much of it was wasted by stairs and floor landings. Before we discovered that everything from toilet paper and cigarettes to vacuum cleaners and TV sets had to be duplicated on each floor. Before our son became interested in drumming and hi-fi equipment. Before our second child, a daughter, was born and began surrounding herself with dolls, stuffed animals, minature furniture. Before my wife began collecting Bennington and quilts and other Americana. Before the paintings crowded the walls and spilled out into the stairwells, along with the files from my study. Before the

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bookshelves were filled and new ones had to be added. Before "finishing" part of the basement. Before having an architect study and negate the feasibility of another room on the roof. . . . Before all this we knew what space was, but we are here now because we no longer know.

Many conversations, most of them started by me, have led to our being here. My wife has at last admitted that the house has become crowded and inefficient. She knows that our elderly live-in maid has difficulty getting up and down the stairs, that she would be hard to replace, that even the men hired to do heavy and high cleaning pant, complain, drift off. She wants the children to have more isolated space. She wants a room of her own. She wants me also to have more privacy and quiet. She is tired of my complaints—and those of my secretary. She is tired of the garden behind the house, tired of watering and weeding. When we entertain, she is tired of the awkward vertical movement from the living room, downstairs to the dining room, and back up again to the library for coffee. It is all steps, with no easy horizontal flow, except on a nice night when she can use the garden. Otherwise her beloved big parties are uncomfortable; the stairs become congested. . . . And yet, though she admits the disadvantages of the house, it is, in her mind, her heart, everything it contains: her, her family, her things. There is no separating the house from its contents. A move is unthinkable. Whatever is wrong with the house, there are worse things wrong with apartments. Haven't we lived in two before the house? Don't I remember what it is like waiting for an elevator, being in one, having to say good morning, good afternoon, good evening, good night to doormen and elevator operators when the days and nights aren't always good? She knows what she doesn't want, an apartment.

I remind her of one we have seen years before, a "maisonette," the ground floor and basement of an apartment house overlooking the East River. No elevator. A better view than that from the brownstone. All the advantages of an apartment house—the horizontality, the service, the security—with none of the disadvantages. She listens, says what we saw was unique, says she'd consider something like it, gambling on the unlikelihood. To strengthen her bet, she adds that she likes our present neighborhood, reminds me that it is central to everything—just east

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of Fifth Avenue shops, a few blocks from Third Avenue theaters and not too far from those on Broadway, near office buildings, right at the pulsing heart of the city. "I don't like exclusively residential neighborhoods. I want to see something besides mothers and nurses wheeling baby carriages. I like those models carrying their portfolios, and spastic messengers with fat rolls of blueprints. I like a choice of banks."

Money distorts true odds. Within a few days the broker comes up with the apartment, the maisonette, we are seeing, very similar to the one seen long ago. It is five blocks from our house, a different neighborhood, as five blocks (or even one) can mean in New York, but still close enough.

The broker says, "It hasn't been listed yet—it's in the hands of an estate—but I have entrée to the lawyers. They've given me a price."

It is much more than we can get for the house, and the estate wants all cash.

The earlier conversations with my wife; the gap in price, plus maybe as much again to fix up the apartment and move into it; my wife's sharp enthusiastic grip—all these are on my mind as we re-enter the living room. Here the broker spreads her arms as if to describe a room that got away: forty-four feet, eight times her arm spread. Her small red fingernails tremble, lost in this grand optimistic space, a vision of the 'twenties, a product of the boom.

"See the thickness of the walls. They. . . ."

Yes, she is right, they don't build them like this anymore. Yes, two contemporary co-ops could fit in this one—maybe three, considering the height of the ceilings, the cubic content. Yes. . . .

We don't have to be sold. We are standing now at the bay window of the living room, watching a tanker at least four hundred feet long, two city blocks, move slowly up the river like a toy put there for our amusement, along with distant prop-like (now pop-like) Pepsi Cola and Paragon Oil signs. Pepsi, Paragon—these and the view itself are liquid and alive. We might be in Venice. How few places, like that, like *this,* are left to show the relationship between sea and land. Here five large rooms look out on the river and the other seven (plus), facing north and south, all have oblique views of it. Yes times twelve (not counting foyer, gallery, pantry, laundry, or storage room). Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

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"It's overcast today," the broker observes, "and besides these windows haven't been washed in months. Can you imagine what this view would be under the right conditions?"

I look at my wife. She looks at me. We can imagine. Not only brighter days but darker ones, an exciting range of weather, sky, river traffic. This is no little garden to cultivate. This is a world—with sky. We raise our sights.

I make an offer substantially below the asking price—one-third cash, one-third a year from now, the balance in two years.

The broker says, "If you get it for that, it will be the best buy since Peter Stuyvesant bought the island from the Indians. But I doubt if your offer will be acceptable."

Disappointment and anxiety flicker across my wife's face. Her nails are digging into my arm again. I say nothing. As we leave the building, elevator operators sitting in the lobby jump to attention.

"You like it, don't you?" my wife asks when the broker leaves.

"It's a beautiful apartment. We won't find anything better."

"Then why didn't you give the broker more leeway?"

"She's experienced. She knows we're seriously interested. She'll get back to us. Don't worry."

The broker calls the next day, says that the offer is unacceptable, that the executors are unwilling to drop the asking price, which has gone out to other brokers, suggests a compromise. "There are no guarantees. Another broker may at any moment bring in a better offer. And of course everything is subject to your approval by the Owners Committee."

"Of course. We'd better see the apartment again."

The physical space and the view are as beautiful as we remember, but now we look more closely at air-conditioning units, kitchen and laundry equipment, chandeliers and sconces, venetian blinds and valances and draperies—almost all in poor condition. Soot drifts in under some of the windows. The linoleum in the kitchen and laundry is worn through.

"We'll have to strip almost everything," I say to my wife.

"Oh, no, there's a lot that's usable."

"What?"

"I like the gas dryer in the laundry. It's a collector's item. And the old stove. And the glass doors on the kitchen cabinets."

In short, she likes the apartment. As I strip it, she is salvaging things in it to add to those in our house. As I anticipate expenses,

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she is discovering economies of the sort she finds when buying things on sale that she wouldn't ordinarily buy. She feels that she has a bargain. I know that the move will cost much more than originally estimated—more in time and effort, as well as money.

We will eliminate the pantry wall and open up the kitchen area. Two of five maid's rooms will make a comfortable study for me, two more will make a nice room for our maid, leaving one, which will have to be carefully planned to accommodate my secretary. To my wife each wall knocked down is a saving, one less room to deal with, the erasure of a line on a plan, but I am beginning to think about the lines within the lines—plumbing and electrical work and patching. There are bookcases and storage walls to be built, a bar, a wine closet. . . . There is a lot to be done.

As we leave, the elevator operators again jump to attention. I would eliminate them too and automate the elevators, or, better still, eliminate the entire building above the ground floor, slice it off clean and watch it float down the river. Yes, as my wife has found assets in old gas dryers and other things that I know must go, I begin to find liabilities in things that must stay.

"Don't you think the terrazzo in the entrance area is pretentious?" I ask.

"No, I like it."

"But it's cold and institutional. Like walking into a bank."

"I like banks."

"But do you think the children or some of our friends will feel comfortable? Maybe the whole place is a little too grand. That Owners Committee. Those jumping-jack elevator operators. . . . Will *you* feel comfortable going to the supermarket in jeans?"

"I won't pay any attention to the operators."

Though I know this isn't true, I know also that it is a way of saying once again that she likes the apartment, wants it.

It takes only a phone call to close the deal verbally, more than a month to close it on paper. During this period we visit the apartment every few days and spend many evenings studying the plan. On it we knock out more walls, restore one that the previous occupant had removed, build the bookshelves, bar, storage walls and other cabinet work, place furniture. My wife is happy. All of our furniture will fit, and there'll be room for more, a need for more, es-

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pecially in the living room. She has cast her bread upon the waters. Now her possessions will multiply. She pencils in new couches, new chairs, new tables, new surfaces for bric-a-brac. The plan is a dense maze, Celtic in its complexity, primitive in its horror vacui. I flinch.

"What's the matter?" she asks.

"I thought this was a chance to get rid of some of the junk, to simplify our life and make it more efficient. You have so many chairs we can't sit in, so many things that don't work."

"They're pretty. What do you want?"

"Less."

Actually, as much as she, I want to add what the new apartment needs, but to do this within the context of subtracting the superfluous and unfunctioning objects that have accumulated in the house over sixteen years: the billiard chair, the cracked green-glass art nouveau pedestal, the warped table inlaid with broken crockery, the mechanical lark lure, the antique cheese press, the peeling store signs, the dozens of zany objects that my wife (often with my encouragement) found irrestible and that I now resist. Tears come to her eyes as I reject these fragments of her life, our life, our life together, a quarter of a century of fashions, trends, impulses, path-findings and -followings, moves.

"Some of what you call junk has become valuable," she says.

"Right. Sell it. Spend the money on things you can use."

We are still bickering when friends, a couple from out-of-town who haven't seen us in some time, come by for drinks. They can't believe we are going to leave our beautiful house. Suddenly we are both calm, cool, rational—a team. Almost in unison we explain the reasons for the move: the need for more usable and efficient space; my wife's needs, the children's, my own; the better view, the service, the security. Our friends tell us about their move, a few years before we knew them, from a small house to their present large one, his ulcer attack, her migraines, their near-divorce, their children's hostility.

"How have your children reacted?"

We hesitate. We cannot now speak in unison. Our daughter has made it clear that she doesn't want to leave the house, that what we are doing is spiteful, uprooting her, her dolls, her stuffed animals. She has seen her sunny new large room with its bay window hanging over the river. She likes the old room better. And our son? He has refused to visit the apartment, doesn't care what his room is

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like, likes his old one fine. Thus there are hints of the next generation's dissension but none of our own. Our public stance is that there is nothing very complicated about a move, nothing worth fighting or getting sick over, no disruption that can't be minimized by proper planning. When our friends leave, we swear that even if our marriage or our bodies fall apart we will never tell. The world will see only our new home, not the bills—economic, physical, psychological.

But already, with the closing still a couple of weeks off, I recognize that we need help. I have so far used a broker to find the apartment, a banker to arrange for the ten percent on contract and the rest of the one-third cash I will need on closing, a lawyer to go over the papers. I am willing to let medical doctors, psychiatrists, marriage counselors, other specialists wait in the wings. What I—we—need now is an architect or a designer or even a decorator, someone to take care of all the details of moving.

My wife says, "We've moved before without help. I don't want anyone to decorate our home. I want it to be ours."

"The situation is different. We moved from one small apartment to another before moving to the house. We didn't have two grown children. We didn't have a maid. I didn't work at home. I didn't have a secretary coming in. We didn't have thousands of books and records and pictures and pieces of china. . . . Whoever you get isn't going to change what you have, just help you place it. It's one thing to draw a shelf on a plan, another to specify the material, its thickness, the type of support. Every line you've drawn on those plans requires more lines, explanations, supervision of the actual work. I can't give my full time to that during the next six months. Neither can you. And even if we could, we're not qualified to do the job. The mistakes we'd make would cost more than the service of a professional. One of the reasons for moving is to correct the mistakes we made in the house."

"They're not mistakes. You said yourself that our situation has changed."

"That too."

My wife looks hurt. For several minutes she stares at the tangle of lines on the floor plan as if wandering among them, following various dead-end paths, going back, starting again, seeking some central answer.

"Who do you suggest?" she asks.

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I mention several architects and designers.

"None of them is right. None knows us well enough to do the job."

"They don't have to know us well, maybe the less well the better. Then they can be more objective. All they have to do is find the right solution to our needs, express our wishes. Just like brokers and bankers and lawyers."

"You make it sound so simple. What if your wishes and mine aren't the same?"

"They mediate. Or we separate, move in different directions."

"Not funny."

We decide to call a designer who worked on the apartment of my brother, who says the man is flexible, thorough, dependable. My wife is wary. She knows that all designers are willful dictators. She remembers that somewhere the architect Richard Neutra said, if he wished, he could break a previously happy marriage by the design of the house in which the family is to live.

"Maybe the converse is true too," I remark.

Again she says, "Not funny."

The designer is in his early fifties, half a dozen years older than we are. His graying beard and moustache are neatly trimmed, tapering to even more closely cropped hair around the ears. The top of his head is bald, scrubbed-looking, possibly polished. His features, too, have a sharp, clean, buffed look. He wears an open shirt with an ascot, a safari jacket, tight twill pants, tan chukkas. His clothes are sharply pressed, immaculately clean. He presents a sense of meticulous measure. From the top of his head to his feet there are no concessions to the excesses of today's fashion, no wide lapels, no flare to the trousers. He looks right for the job—like us, a trifle dated. And with him is an assistant in his early thirties with much more hair, more collar, more pants bottom, no ascot, no tie—a link, he seems, to the hip present. Together they will understand us—and maybe our children.

They go through our house, asking what works, what doesn't, what stays, what goes. They comment enthusiastically about a few pieces, remain tactfully silent about most. They like the house itself, wonder why we want to leave, ask us to explain. While we talk the designer makes notes and directs his assistant to take

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various measurements and Polaroid shots. The tapemeasure whirs, the camera clicks. . . .

After about two hours we walk to the apartment building. As we enter our apartment, I say, "I wish I didn't feel as if I were still in the lobby. This is the single space I like least. It's so big and cold and forbidding."

"It won't be," the designer replies, "not with pictures on the walls, good lighting, a rug, plants, maybe some woodwork."

"Yes," my wife says, "I don't mind the entrance, but the whole place is so big and empty."

"That's what we're here for," the designer replies.

We walk through the apartment, quickly first, so they can get a general sense of it.

"Splendid!" the designer announces in almost every room. "Splendid scale! . . . Splendid openness! . . . Splendid view! . . ."

His assistant is silent the first time through, concentrating, it seems, more on architectural details than on the overall space, perhaps wondering again why we are moving, perhaps hiding some objective judgment.

"What I like about it," he says the second time through, "is the lack of fussy details. You don't find that in many buildings of this period. We can clean up the window line in the living room and get rid of the mantel there and in the bedroom, and all these chandeliers and sconces and drapes."

As he finishes he yanks a stained faded drape from the valance. It falls, letting in light.

"But we want some of the warmth and charm of our house," my wife says looking sadly at the drape on the floor.

The designer looks paternally at his assistant and my wife. The assistant has been a bad boy, but a good bad boy. My wife has been a good homemaker, but a bad good homemaker. "No two places have the same character," he says. "We must find the particular warmth and charm that suits this apartment."

They are busy now, taking more notes, measurements, photographs. They check measurements against the plans. They rap walls, discover a hidden niche in my wife's study, two covered bookcases and another window in the living room and another niche near that.

"We could tuck a little bar in here," the designer says.

"We don't want a little bar," I reply.

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My wife adds, "We want a big bar, a bar bar that you sit at on bar stools."

"Oh."

"Oh."

The afternoon goes this way. They make discoveries we have missed on ten visits to the apartment. We reiterate demands that we thought were clear at our house, from the way we've lived, the way we've talked to them about our "program," as they call it.

"We'll have to visit your house again," the designer says. "We'll need the lineal feet of bookshelves, kitchen cabinets, hanging space in closets; phone locations; TV, kitchen and laundry equipment—you know. And we'll have to come back here frequently. When do you take possession?"

"The closing's set for two weeks from now. Next week we appear before the Owners Committee. The lawyer for the seller said that's routine. The committee's already checked our references. The lawyer's given us keys. I'll give you one."

"Well—I thought everything was definite—but until the purchase is completed, we can work on a time basis, the usual $50 an hour. If we go ahead, that will be applied against our straight 25%. I'll send you the standard contract."

"We'd also like an estimate for the cost of the job and the time it will take. We leave for the Cape in early June and want to move into the apartment before then."

"We can't prepare an estimate, even a rough one, until we agree on what's to be done. We'll make sketches. If you approve those, we'll proceed to working drawings and contract bids. If the contractor starts work by early February, you should be in in four months—barring changes, of course, and finishing work that can be done over the summer."

An appointment is set for the assistant to come to our house again in a week, when he'll do the additional necessary measurements and get detailed information on kitchen and laundry equipment. Meanwhile he and the designer will stay at the apartment for another hour or so and then visit it as necessary. They hope to have some preliminary sketches to show us in about two weeks, soon after the closing. No time will be lost; none can be if we're going to move by June.

"They're very professional," I say to my wife as we walk home.

"All right," she snaps, "I'm not. But I don't believe in this whole

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idea of instant design. It took sixteen years to get our house looking the way it does. It grew organically, not from some master plan. One piece of furniture led to another, one accessory led to another—"

"They can save you all that time."

"I don't want it saved. And I don't want to be saved. I don't want to be dictated to. . . . They don't like women anyway."

"There was nothing to indicate that."

"Oh, yes, there was. Did you see the way they looked at our furniture. And the first thing they want to do in the apartment is tear out the mantel, the best thing there. And how many times did I tell them that the bar in the house is too small, that I like to sit at a bar and look at the water, the way we do on the Cape?"

"None of that was aimed at you. They have to begin somewhere. They'll do their sketches and we'll criticize them. You'll get what you want."

"Maybe— with a lot of condescension. They don't talk to you the way they do to me. With you, everything's so cozy, so clubby, so man-to-man—all that talk about contracts and estimates and working drawings and schedules. You just have to say yes. No wonder you get along so well. All you care about is how long the job will take, how much it will cost, how everything will function. I care about how everything will look."

"It will look beautiful. Give them a chance. Tell them what you need, without stipulating design. Don't ask them to duplicate the house. If you want that, there's no point in moving. Wait and see their sketches."

"I'll wait."

She meets with the assistant designer. At his urging and mine, she goes through the house, room by room, closet by closet, shelf by shelf, cupboard by cupboard, looking for things that can be discarded, sold, traded for other things we'll need more.

"He's right. You're right. I don't need it all, but these things mean something to me, they're part of my life, memories, three-dimensional souvenirs." She smiles imploringly.

I suggest items: lamps that will be replaced by built-in lighting, furniture that will be replaced by storage walls, the art nouveau pedestal, the warped table, the store signs, some paintings and sculpture that have become more valuable in the market than to us.

Well, maybe one lamp she never really liked that much. Maybe

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the warped table, maybe one or two works of art that have become *really* valuable. But not the pedestal, not the store signs, not. . . .

"I've been unreasonable," she announces the night before our meeting with the Owners Committee. "They should design the apartment; I'll furnish it." She returns to the floor plans, squeezing pieces in here and there. "The pedestal will look marvelous in that corner. It will be a little surprise."

"To everyone but me," I reply.

There is no stopping her. They will design the apartment, she will furnish it, decorate it, give it its warmth and charm. I glance at the plan she is scribbling on in bed. Penciled lines extend beyond the boundaries of the apartment, like furniture hanging out of the windows.

"You don't think there's any chance we won't be accepted?" she asks.

"No, the lawyer said they've checked everything."

"Wouldn't that be something?"

"What?"

"If we didn't get in."

"Yes, it would be something."

I turn on my side away from the light, wondering just what, more specificially, it would be. During these weeks while my wife's enthusiasm has increased, mine has diminished, turned into souring detachment. I have already spent too many hours discussing the move with her, and with the broker, the lawyer, the designers. Even now I have little time in which to do anything else. And yet I know I have just begun. The detailed planning and paperwork, as well as the physical move, are still to come. And I must still sell the house. Where once a move meant piling a few possessions into a car or a station wagon or, years later, a truck, I realize that now it will mean not that day's work but the next four or five months'. Will it be worth that, trading almost half a year of my life (some fairly large fraction of whatever years remain) for a more efficient home, a superior view? And how much more efficient will the new place be if my wife has her way, if she insists on transporting the clutter of the house? I fall asleep counting rooms, those in the house, those in the apartment, twelve of one, a dozen of the other, a baker's dozen, more. . . . I don't think it would be so bad if the Owners Committee turned us down. Yes, it would be a rejection. That would be

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something. But it would be a gift of the next several months of my life. And that would be something too.

The chairman of the board of one of the large chemical companies is also chairman of the co-op. My wife and I soar to his tower suite in a new office building on Park Avenue. It is new on the outside anyway. In his suite everything is old. The mahogany desk and chairs, the couch and coffee table (hunt-style), the prints on the walls all seem to say that they have been there longer than the building itself. I can imagine how smoothly his move must have gone—just a memo or a brief call on intercom and then one morning he reports to this replica of what he had in some older building. I am envious. None of his furniture hangs out the windows.

He introduces us to two more directors of the co-op, the president of the real estate firm which manages it and the president of an oil company. They lead us to the couch and sit opposite us, three men in dark suits, white shirts, muted ties, staring hard. I feel like a hippie in my blazer and striped shirt and tie, married to another in her suede suit and turtleneck. Perhaps in trying to reassure her and relieve her anxiety, I have overemphasized the casualness of the occasion. I had told her, "Wear what you want. The worst they can do is refuse our money. Ha ha." The joke doesn't ring true now. They can refuse *us*.

At last the chairman speaks. He welcomes us to the co-op, says that it is one of the finest, best-managed buildings in the city and that he and his co-directors want to keep it that way. . . . They and their predecessors have established rules to maintain the high standards. Deliveries must be made through the service entrance. Servants must use it too. After midnight all entrances are locked. One must ring for an attendant. . . . Alterations must be approved by the managing agent. So must sub-leases. . . . All of this is for our own protection as well as the other owners'. We will receive the full list of rules and procedures. . . . He invites questions. We have none.

"That was easy," my wife whispers when we leave the chairman's office.

In the reception room another couple is waiting. They are fatter than us, better dressed, a little too well dressed.

"Do you think they'll get in?" my wife asks at the elevator landing.

"Yes. Those men would never put themselves in the position of

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rejecting anyone face-to-face. They have professionals to do that, probably someone in the real estate agent's office, The Man Who Says No."

"Professionals—I'm getting tired of professionals. I bet you weren't so sure of yourself when those three men were studying us."

"For a moment I wasn't sure they'd accept us. But I was sure that if they didn't, they'd be making a mistake."

I laugh. She laughs. We are happy. One hurdle has been crossed, and the closing is just two days off.

It, too, goes easily—professionally, as I later remind my wife. The work has been done in advance by the lawyers—for us, for the estate of the seller, for the co-op corporation. Papers are handed around the conference table—an assignment of shares of stock in the co-op; a proprietary lease; the check, certified by my bank, for one-third of the purchase price; notes covering the balance due, secured by the stock to be held in escrow; the escrow agreement itself; another check, uncertified, for the adjustment of the month's maintenance, which has been prepaid by the seller. . . . While my wife and I sign what and where we're told, the broker—that active, talkative little lady—is motionless and silent. She waits quietly (professionally, I think again) for the commission check from the seller. When it's given to her, she glances at it once, like a poker player's down card, recognizes the amount which she has previously computed, folds the check, puts it in her purse, and pounces on us.

"I've talked confidentially to a few people I thought might be interested in your house, explained that it was nothing definite, just a possibility. I think I've got some real interest."

"At what price?"

"The price of the apartment—or very close to it."

"Bring them around."

My wife's expression changes. Until then, she may have thought that we were simply buying a beautiful apartment overlooking the East River. Now she knows, really knows, that I intend to sell the house. Until then she was crossing hurdles, winning some race; now she is losing another, one she has been running for sixteen years. Signing all those documents and checks has cured my ambivalence, my detachment. I am committed now to the apartment. The house is only something I have to sell.

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On the way home she asks, "Do you think maybe we've made a mistake?"

"No, I'm sure we did the right thing."

That seems enough to say, enough reassurance. When the designers appear two days later with their preliminary sketches, I discover how wrong I am, how much more reassurance she needs.

The senior designer spreads the plans flat on our dining room table. His assistant places an ashtray on each curling end.

"The entrance foyer!" the designer announces.

There, in that cold space, is a warm, wood wall closet, opposite our present living room couch, above which hang three small paintings. On the floor there are a lot of plants, a piece of sculpture, and a rug, which he explains "could be an antique Afghanistan."

My wife starts to complain? "But it isn't. . . " *my home at all,* I know she wants to say.

The designer raises his finger, stops her. "I want you to get the whole concept," he says, flipping this sketch over to the next sheet.

The gallery walls are covered with bookcases, each shelf filled end-to-end, except for a few carefully placed art objects, with compulsively sketched books. All that's missing is the titles and authors. But I can see them—from J. R. Ackerley to Louis Zukofsky.

"You've allowed enough space?" I ask.

"Oh, yes, Including the cases in the living room and those scattered elsewhere through the apartment, you'll have 25% more than now."

He turns the sheet. We are in the living room. At one end, about five feet from the wall, there is indeed a large bar with stools, not facing the river but looking south at it through the window he has uncovered. The bar nicely breaks the length of the room and establishes its own area, just as at the other end the uncovered recessed bookcases seem to widen and define that area, where he has retained the ornate face of the mantel but enclosed it and open log storage in a continuous shelf running from one side of the room to the other. A small couch, many chairs, tables, and cushions are scattered informally throughout.

"My mantel!" my wife begins. "We like to sit around a fire and look at it and a pretty mantel and listen to music. What you've done doesn't look—comfortable. All those little chairs and

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tables. . . . And we want to be able to look at the river. From the bar. Without craning our necks. And—"

"There's a lot to explain about this sketch. It's a beautiful room but difficult to work with. We wanted to cut its length and make it less rigid. We could have kept the mantel and flanked it with couches and we could have run the bar lengthwise, but that would have made the room more linear. The surface above the fireplace is intended to be limestone or rough-hewn wood—we want your preference—but whatever it is, the material should be warmer than the marble of the existing mantel, and you'll have a lot more surface. The same material would be used for the bar. We think of the entire bar area as being raised on a platform. That way you won't see the East River Drive, you'll look right out onto the river. The speakers for your hi-fi would be recessed in the bookshelves or in the fireplace enclosure. You mustn't think of these sketches as anything but preliminary. We want you to study them and let us have your comments as soon as possible. Our next meeting should be in the apartment. Maybe tomorrow or the next day?"

We set a date. Then he continues, room by room, presenting the sketches, explaining what materials he has in mind, the reasons for eliminating certain pieces of furniture and adding others. . . . The dining room, our bedroom, my wife's study, and the children's rooms need hardly to be touched. He has perfectly rearranged our existing furniture, adding only a storage wall in our bedroom and the study. My office furniture, too, is perfectly rearranged. The room is larger and better laid out than my present one. Not only has he knocked out the wall between the two maids' rooms but he has eliminated the corridor running alongside them and given me that extra space. Similarly, my secretary's office has been enlarged and made more efficient.

We come to the kitchen, an area now, with the pantry wall out, about twenty feet square. Like the sketch of the living room, it is open and informal. A ten by four foot butcher block table with stools around it extends from the window wall. The refrigerator is neatly recessed into an irregularity in the opposite wall. The other two walls have butcher-block counters with the existing glass-door cabinets above, which my wife has said she wants to keep. Mottled dishes, bowls, platters, pitchers (all Bennington, I suppose) are visible on the shelves along with unmottled pieces—everything from Bennington to Sandwich. But this is my wife's department.

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She studies the sketch, has questions about knife slots, platter storage, a place for cook books, an herb shelf, more electric outlets, more hooks, more. . . .

The designer takes notes. His assistant goes into our kitchen and for the first time takes pictures there of all the walls, all the things hanging on them—bread boards, baskets, rolling pins, sausages, bunches of garlic, scissors, bottle openers, graters, strainers, a pencil sharpener, a match striker, an old-fashioned yard stick on a leather thong, a nest of metal measuring cups, pipkins, dozens and dozens of utensils that don't appear in the sketch.

"There'll be a place for everything," the designer says.

"And everything in its place," his assistant adds a bit sarcastically.

Once again the designer gives his assistant and my wife that paternal look, lofty, perhaps justifiable, from years of experience.

That night, with drinks in hand, my wife and I study the sketches, not room by room now but foot by foot—in scale, one quarter inch to the foot.

"I hate it," she says as she looks at the sketch of the living room. "All those chairs and tables look like a lot of praying mantises, poised on their skinny little legs. . . . Maybe those guys are right about the mantel. We will have a lot more surface, and it kind of ties the room together. And maybe they're right about running the bar across the room. But they're not right about raising that area on a platform. That's trendy nonsense. It turns the rest of the room into a conversation pit. I don't like conversation pits. D'you know what I'd like? Another drink."

"Me too: another drink. And me too: no platform, no conversation pit. When we're sitting at the bar we'll be high enough. Besides the platform would be a big expense. For nothing. If we see the drive, we see it. Right?"

"Right. I love it. I love the whoosh of the cars going by."

These are the first unqualifiedly positive words she has spoken all evening: we are making progress. After all, except for restudying the living room and adding details in the kitchen and a few other areas, the sketches satisfy our requirements.

She continues to look at the living room sketch. "It's going to be awfully dirty and noisy."

"Where the windows are working well, there's no dirt or noise. The others will be fixed."

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"It'll never be as quiet as this garden."

"I thought you liked the activity on the drive and the river."

"I like it here."

"It's late for that decision."

"Too late?"

"No. I'd rather put the apartment back on the market and pay the designers for their time than go through the trouble and expense of the move and have you decide then. . . . Also, by then this house will be sold—I hope."

"I don't know how you can be so detached. We've lived here sixteen years. Doesn't this house mean anything to you?"

"Yes, I like it very much; I like the apartment better."

"But you were the one who objected to the lobby and the doorman and the elevator operators and our own foyer."

"I'm used to them now, and our foyer's not going to look the way it does."

"The children don't want to move."

"Why would they? They've never known any other home, except during the summer and on vacations. If we're happier, they will be too."

"You really think we're doing the right thing?"

"Yes."

At the next meeting with the designers, we spend most of our time in the apartment living room. There they have taken down all the drapes, and they have completely exposed the window behind the future location of the bar and the bookcases on the wall at right angles to the fireplace. Already the room is brighter and more open, the bar location is right.

I say this, and explain—in neutral, practical terms—that we don't, however, want the bar area raised, that we can't justify the expense of the platform which will create a step up at the entrance to the living room and a step down inside it, both possibly hazardous.

The designers resist. They want clear separation and definition of bar and seating areas. "There's another problem," the designer says, "we have to get plumbing to the bar. We were going to run it under the platform, from the powder room."

"What about running it from the master bath below?"

"That's a possibility. We'll look into it."

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We concentrate now on the seating. My wife brushes aside all the insect-like little chairs and tables. "What we want," she says, "is a big table in front of the fireplace and some comfortable couches around it—at least two, maybe three."

"We tried to make the room more informal, more flexible. You'll lose that, once you anchor a seating group at the fireplace."

"I like to stretch out on a couch. So does my husband, the children, our friends —"

"Leather? There are some new Italian couches."

"We'd have to see them, sit in them."

"Maybe if we covered them in the same leather, or whatever material, as the bar stools —"

We can see the revised design concept taking shape in his mind. There are showrooms to visit, shopping to be done. My wife is happy. She will be buying conversation pits that look like couches and bar stools.

We visit the showrooms, sometimes together, sometimes separately, because one of us must be at the house to show it. Our broker and others who have received the listing call, make appointments, lead couples (mostly younger than us) through the house. Increasingly I resent the intrusion on my time, and my wife the intrusion on her home. I think that she and I have agreed on what will be included in the sale—everything that's attached (carpeting, shelving, lighting fixtures); kitchen and laundry equipment; two complete groups of furniture, in the breakfast room and garden, which were designed for those specific areas. But suddenly she decides that maybe, just possibly, she may want the breakfast room bench, the garden tables. . . .

"Where would you put them?"

"I don't know. There'll be a spot."

"But the price I've quoted to the brokers includes these items. I'm not asking you to throw in any of the other furniture we won't need. We can negotiate that later with the buyer."

In the same way as, by compromise, the apartment is gradually being designed and furnished according to our collective taste, the house is being sold. My wife's reluctance communicates itself to prospective buyers and balances my eagerness, based on the realization that, if I don't get the house sold soon, I will have to borrow still more money from the bank.

Our best prospect is a young executive and his wife, with one

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child, another on the way, who live in a house, just a block from ours. He receives a very high salary, could afford the interest on a large purchase money mortgage, but cannot put up much cash. He will accept my price, if I will accept his terms. While these discussions go on during several visits, my wife and his wife have theirs. My wife explains why she doesn't want to sell the house, what it means to her, what she has put into it, dozens of hidden conveniences and time-consuming solutions—a concealed shelf in the library that can be used for coffee and brandy; the built-in tray storage next to the refrigerator; the way the former dumbwaiter shaft has been utilized (on the ground floor for more kitchen counter and cabinets, on the second floor for the bar, in her bathroom for a recessed vanity, in our son's room for an additional closet); what we have done in the basement; security precautions—the bars on the skylights, the alarm system, the time-switch on the outside lights. . . .

With each word, as my wife moves up and down through the house, the executive's wife wants it more. She says that this is what they would be paying for, the things we have done, the things they have not done in their own house, never will do because they just don't have the patience. I could be listening to my own wife, feeling her nails on my arm.

Suddenly my wife asks, "Why don't we rent the house to them?"

I tell her that that's something the executive and I will work out. After the couple leaves, I begin, "Look, dear—" she is forewarned by my icy affection—"I don't want to rent the house. I have to sell it. I have to pay for the apartment. I have to pay for the move. Rental income would be dissipated in taxes. It wouldn't be good for him either —"

"But if we rent the house and don't like the apartment, we could come back."

"We haven't moved yet! And I don't want to move again. Ever."

The executive calls me the next day. "I've been thinking about your wife's suggestion of renting." I suppress any comment. "I've talked to my lawyer. He says it won't work. I need the mortgage as a tax-shelter. But suppose, through my firm, I can arrange a loan from our bank instead of the mortgage from you. Suppose I paid you all cash—well, I don't want to renegotiate or anything, but my lawyer says that I'd be entitled to some discount—"

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"I'm disappointed," I lie. "I thought we had agreed on price."

"My lawyer says a discount for cash is customary."

"How much off the price does he think would be fair?"

"Twenty thousand."

I would close the deal immediately but say, "Let me think it over."

I wait for two days before calling, tell him I've had to persuade my wife, review basic terms, go over the items that are included in the sale, get his lawyer's name, say I'll have mine forward a contract.

Our meetings with the designers are more pressured now. We must turn over our house by June 15—"barring acts of God"—fifteen days later than our original schedule, but it is already the first week in February and no work has begun. The designers can't have a contractor bid on the job until they have completed working drawings and specifications. I urge them to select a contractor and give him the working drawings for the areas that have been approved.

"Doing it piecemeal can be very expensive, especially if there are any changes. This isn't like a commercial job where we can establish unit costs. Here everything is individual."

"There won't be any changes," I say with pretended confidence.

Sets of plans are printed and sent out for bids, with just a few areas marked "HOLD"—the kitchen, my wife's study, and the master bathroom.

We have talked a lot about the bathroom. In our house we have small separate baths with straightforward white plumbing fixtures. In the apartment there is a single large bath off the bedroom. The former occupant, a wealthy widow, had decorated it in a 'thirties Hollywood style—glossy black paint on the walls; black enamel sink, tub, and toilet; angular chrome lighting fixtures; mirrored vanity and sink enclosure on which the mirroring has darkened with age.

"I love it," my wife said when she first saw it.

"It doesn't have a shower."

"We can put one over the tub and install sliding doors. That's all we need to do. It's perfect."

"Well, maybe if we paint the walls white," I begin.

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"White! The black is what makes the room interesting."

"Like a crypt. . . . When we install a shower, we'll need tile over the tub. Do you want that black too?"

"Maybe the tile could be white, just that pocket of white, an accent."

"To make the black blacker?"

"Right."

"I have a confession: I don't know if I'd be happy washing in a black sink. Of course I've never tried, but somehow black doesn't seem as clean as white."

"Well, if you're going to change the sink, I'd like two sinks. We're used to two. Often we want to wash at the same time."

"On the Cape we only have one."

"The Cape is different. We're never rushing to dinner parties. We're never rushing—maybe two white sinks set in a black counter. And my vanity at the other end of the bathroom could match the counter. And maybe a big shaggy white rug on the floor where I can do my exercises. . . ."

Thus the design of our bathroom begins to emerge, has been emerging now for weeks, months. I have gone along with black accented by white, but my wife doesn't know what the black material should be—marble? glass? formica?—and she isn't sure if she wants drawers in her vanity, or shelves, or a combination of the two. The designers have been called in. They know our intimate needs for electric razor and water-pic outlets, a hook for a douche bag, a rug to exercise on, how many towels we use; but they don't know what black material my wife prefers, how many drawers and/or shelves she wants. For reasons of cost and practicality they recommend formica and submit a sample. No, my wife says, it is too matte, too gray, too slate-like. She wants something as shiny as the walls and plumbing fixtures.

The contractors' bids, excluding the "HOLD" areas, come in. The lowest is almost double our "budget" figure. We go over it in detail; eliminate items (the refinishing of floors which will be covered by carpet, the canvassing of walls, the recessing of air-conditioning units, new doors to match woodwork); substitute domestic tile in the kitchen and laundry for imported quarry tile. . . . Still the figure is large.

"At least we know what it is," I say to my wife. "I've told them to go ahead on what's approved, but we've got to resolve the design for

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the bathroom, the kitchen, your study."

Under the pressure of the revised but still-high low bid, she finally goes along with matte black formica and decides on a combination of drawers and shelves for her vanity.

"Splendid!"

In the kitchen the designers have given her exactly the equipment, counter and storage space she needs. There are little things she is not so sure about. For example, she will place hanging hooks later. She will teach these designers about delayed, rather than instant, design.

"Splendid!"

In her study, the question is what she wants in the storage wall. At various stages of design it has contained mostly files, then mostly hanging space, then mostly shelves and drawers. Her present desk, which will not fit well in the room, has two files. Since she will be getting a new desk—she has seen a hexagonal Victorian piece that would look beautiful in the bay window—why not have two file drawers built into it? All right, there'll be no file drawers in the storage wall. We re-measure the hanging space she presently has and compare it with what exists in the apartment. There is at least ten percent more in the apartment. All right, no hanging space. She will not have room for her dresser, so what she needs is drawers, right? No, that is what she has been thinking about all these weeks, she does not want drawers, has never really liked them, likes things folded on open shelves. She wants shelves, lots of shelves, adjustable shelves.

"Splendid!"

The designers erase "HOLD" on their tracings and proceed with the final working drawings, send us and the building's managing agent prints for approval, get a price from the contractor for the additional work, get our approval on that too.

Things are moving now, changing shape. Walls are coming down. Channels are being dug for electrical and plumbing work. Debris in heavy canvas bags is being carried out of the apartment. The place is a mess. Cement and plaster are everywhere. It hardly seems possible that we will be living here in about three months.

Between visits to the apartment, we are shopping again. We need kitchen stools. We need rugs. We need a wall covering for the dining room, just the right rough linen, one that will be "splendid."

The volume of mail increases. It is mostly bills—from the

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designer, from the contractor, from the various showrooms we have visited. I am no longer working. I am no longer doing anything but moving. All my wife and I talk about is the move. We make love talking about it. We dream about it. We wake up talking about it. Our daughter says, "I'm bored of it." My wife barely has the energy to correct her grammar. Our son tries a fancy new word on us. He says we're behaving "obsessively." I scold him feebly for his lack of interest in our new home.

When I'm not dreaming about the move, I'm unable to sleep, thinking about it. I place furniture, sculpture, paintings. I pay bills. I decide which paintings and sculpture must be sold to pay the bills. In my mind, I visit art galleries and antique dealers, as I will, in actuality, during the coming weeks. My nights are as full as my days. Sometimes during these hours I move from the specific details of the move to more general problems of moving. Why, I ask myself, am I doing this? Why is it so hard? I don't ask my wife because she has by now accepted the move and made, even if under duress, all these final decisions that will make it possible. Besides she is asleep.

I count the moves in my life. The little hops from apartment to apartment, made by my parents during the Depression. Their last move, made while I was overseas during World War II. The first apartment I shared with my wife, before she was my wife—a bare little place in what was called College Town. The next, slightly more furnished, in The Village. And the next, with its extra room for a child or children, where I used to write in fear of losing that room.

There is always one bare room that I love and never want to relinquish and, over the years, there are the others, more and more furnished, over-furnished, that I love too and share with my wife until they spill over into the empty room and we have to find new emptiness, fill it, and move again. Yes, I have felt the need for both the empty and the cluttered environment—at different times and finally (luxuriously) at the same time.

The moves, measured in blocks, have always been small, though none as small as this one. I was born on the East River, when the Flower Free Surgical Hospital was located at York Avenue and 63rd Street. My paternal grandfather last lived in a brownstone far east on 50th Street. My father and his brothers and sisters would wave as Grandpa went by on the Fall River Line headed to or from Boston on business. In the new apartment our living room cannot

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be more than a few feet from where my father as a child stood waving. Yes, the East River is my river.

Still trying to fall asleep, I count boats we have seen on our visits to the apartment. Tankers, freighters, tugs, barges, scows float through my mind like so many rooms, some empty, some heavy with cargo, some full of garbage.

The East River is my river, but I know more about the Hudson. I can imagine Henry Hudson standing proudly at the wheel as he approaches New York Harbor. What do I know of East? Was he an Englishman too, a navigator and explorer establishing Dutch claims? What was East's first name? Something less majestic than Henry? John perhaps? Long John East, a gangly but capable sailor in his teens. Lieutenant John East by the time he is twenty. And then quickly Captain John and Sir John, knighted because he will not sell his services to the Dutch. His descendants will sell theirs. Alas, there has been a thinning of Sir John's blood. I see these descendants, young and tall as he was, at the wheels of the Circle Line, guiding their boats around Manhattan and explaining the sights to German and Japanese tourists. I count these boats too. . . .

All this is waking thought, conscious counting, anchored in reality. Like a sailor on watch, I refuse to fall asleep, fearing punishment. I know that if I give in, I will drift off into that realm of fantasy in which I am always moving, moving, moving. . . .

Shelves, cabinets, closets begin to grow on the walls. The detailing of the woodwork is elegantly simple, the grain carefully matched, the oil finish protective without being shiny. The bookshelves in my office and in the gallery and living room—all designed and approved early—are ready first. They stand warmly, cordially inviting Ackerley, Acton, Adams. . . . It will take days, maybe weeks, to fill these shelves, dusting each book and placing it alphabetically, and this is just one part of the move. I must not forget, still thinking alphabetically, art, Bennington, clothes, dishes, equipment, furniture . . . things. . . .

I call a mover, ask for an estimate of his time, my dollars. He stomps through the house, beginning in the basement. He opens closets, asks if we intend to move this or that. He chews on a cigar as he studies works of art, calculating their size and weight, his esthetic for everything. I calculate his size and weight—just under six feet, probably 260 pounds. I guess he can lift twice what I can. I am

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no mover. I am a movee. He says that the job should take two packers five days, working eight hours a day, regular time, and that the move itself will require four men and two vans for at least two more days. It seems impossible that all these men, all these hours are needed to move us. Yet the estimate in dollars is small change within the context of the entire move, the big change. I will sell a Tiffany lamp.

"You can't sell that lamp," my wife says, "It's the first one we got."

"When we bought it, it cost a hundred dollars. It's worth three thousand now. To a dealer. But not to me."

"I like it."

"*I like it too, but we don't need it.*"

The mover, the designer, the contractor, and I work out a logistical schedule. In mid-May my secretary's office, my own, and all the books will be packed and moved. For two weeks I will be in the apartment, at campaign headquarters, getting the offices set up, arranging the books, making last-minute decisions. At the beginning of June the second wave will begin, the art and antique china, followed immediately by the third and final wave, furniture, clothing, essentials. As you see, I have begun to think in military terms. I suspect I am suffering from battle fatigue.

The Monday morning the packers arrive I explain just how I want the books taken off the shelves (sequentially), how I want them placed in the cartons (sequentially), how I want the cartons labeled (sequentially). The packers smile. They understand what I want. They also understand that books have a will of their own. Half of the first row—Ackerley et al—is removed from the shelf and placed vertically in a carton. The space remaining to the side and on top still has to be filled. There the rest of the shelf takes on a new order in the carton, according to thickness and height. If the right size isn't available, in sequence, the packers find it, perhaps on the next shelf, perhaps on the one after that. The awkwardness and irregularities of life enter the carton and are sealed for shipment to our new house. I can try only to keep them to a minimum. I hardly dare turn my back to answer the phone or read the morning's mail.

That day, among the bills I initial and hand to my secretary, the solicitations I throw into the basket, the magazines I can no longer keep up with, the notification from the bank of yet another over-

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draft, there is a letter from close friends, that rarest of communications. They are in New Orleans. There, in an obscure antique store, they have found an illuminated turn-of-the-century dentist's sign, of hammered tin, in the shape of a large flattened tooth, roots down, four feet from biting surface to tip of longest root, two feet wide, half a foot thick, with the word DENTIST in green glass on both faces and one edge, $500, plus shipping. A steal. The wife has described it. The husband has drawn a small sketch. They love it. They can't use it. They've thought of us.

"Just what we need," I say, laughing as I hand the letter to my wife.

She studies it carefully. Her eyes brighten. "It might work over the bar."

"We have a fixture there."

"It's ordinary."

"Yes, it gives a lot of light. How much do you think would come through those little green letters?"

"Enough. It would be intimate. We could try it anyway."

"At the same time as we try the apartment while we rent the house. No."

I think the subject is closed. I spend the day running up and down the stairs between the library and my office and my secretary's. Cartons are everywhere—in those rooms and downstairs in the entrance hall and dining room where the packers have begun to pile them for the move. At dinner, surrounded by cartons, my wife resumes:

"You can't lose on Americana. That sign is bound to go up in value. I'll take the risk. I'll take care of the shipping. I'll have the existing fixture taken down and this one put up. If you don't like it, I'll sell it. All at my responsibility. . . ."

I remain silent. My wife goes on at length, explaining that our daughter will want the tooth, that it, like the Bennington, will someday be hers, in her home, for her delight and that of her family. I shouldn't only think of myself, I should think of her, our little girl.

"She's eleven!" I reply. "You'll spend a thousand dollars before you're through. But maybe that's a bargain. Let me cut through everything: I don't like the tooth. I don't want it over the bar. I don't want to store it in a warehouse while it enhances in value. I'm not an antique dealer."

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She makes one last try. She shows the sketch to the children.

"Oh, gross. . . Gross . . . " they agree in the vernacular of the day.

A tooth for a tooth—I am familiar, with the concept, expect now to give in to my wife on moving some unneeded pieces to which she has tenaciously clung despite tempting offers from dealers. However, I do not expect to give, precisely, a tooth of my own.

The next morning, my left jaw aches. I can't brush my teeth there, can't even shave comfortably over the spot. My head throbs with psychosomatic theory. *Le corps a ses raisons* . . . I restate my instructions to the packers ("to the extent possible," I qualify now), review a few items with my secretary, leave her writing change-of-address notices, and rush to the dentist.

The rear upper-left molar is impacted. It must come out. The nurse sets up an immediate appointment with an extractionist and hands me a slip on which a dental diagram is printed. The rear upper-left molar has an X drawn through it.

I have not had a tooth pulled in twenty years or so. I remember then having had to wait several days for an appointment with the busy specialist in his small old-fashioned suite on the ground-floor of a Fifth Avenue apartment house. Now I enter a large new office building, not far from that of the chairman of the co-op. Five dentists have their names on the doors leading to an entire tower floor. Inside there are two receptionists at a long formica counter, behind them a secretary typing bills, off to one side a large waiting room in which more than a dozen men and women are seated in a grid of plastic chairs, tables, and magazine racks.

I give the printed slip to a receptionist. She clips it to a form on which she types my name, address, occupation.

"Medical plan?"

"None."

"No medical insurance!"

I might as well have said I am a Communist. I feel the need to assert my Americanism: "I'm moving," I say and add now to my present address, the one I'll be at after mid-June.

"Take a seat. We'll call you as soon as possible."

I sit among the other anonymous toothaches. Like them I flip through the pages of a magazine, looking mostly at the ads. I want nothing. Just a tooth taken out. Less than nothing. A negative need.

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My name is called. I am led down a bright vinyl corridor to one of the many narrow recovery cubicles, each containing a built-in cot with a fresh sheet on it, a fresh case on the pillow, a blanket folded at its foot. There are hooks on the back of the door, a dimmer switch on the bullet-shaped lighting fixture over the cot, a volume control for the Muzak, and a removable spittoon, sterilized and waiting on a bracket extending from the wall.

"Make yourself comfortable!" I'm told.

I remove my jacket, hang it up, stretch out on the cot, turn off what my son calls bubble-gum music. I can't chew it.

A nurse enters, asks if I have any history of heart trouble.

"None," I reply, waiting for her to exclaim, "No heart history!"

But she is already taking my pulse.

"Are there any anesthetics you're allergic to?"

"Novocaine makes me jittery. I'd prefer something that makes me feel good. Nitrous oxide—" I suggest tentatively.

"The doctor will have to make that decision."

I am led down another bright corridor, past a young black mopping the floor with disinfectant, to one of the operating rooms. The doctor looks at the form with the slip clipped to it, says my name, waits.

"Yes. And of the five names on the door—?"

I smile. He doesn't. He mutters a name, nods to the nurse, and a needle enters my arm. For a moment, there is the shock, the sting of it, and then, rather than the euphoria I requested, temporary oblivion.

Fragmentedly, I remember returning to the cubicle. My arm is over the nurse's shoulder. The corridor is still being mopped. It is difficult to get past the mopper. I do not know where I am. A hospital? A factory? The new apartment? Is the move over? I ask or think I ask. The nurse helps me onto the cot. Her rubber-soled oxfords squeak down the corridor. The room is silent except for the steady hum of the air-conditioning. . . I doze, awaken, use the spittoon, fill it with blood, doze again, awaken again, spit again. . . . The nurse turns the light on, the music up (a peppy mid-day tune from some musical tragi-comedy). She rinses the bowl. I ask the name of the anesthetic I've been given.

"Sodium pentathol," she replies, "the truth serum."

"Oh. Then you won't mind my saying I hope I don't see you again."

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I intend to take a taxi, feel that I must return home quickly to supervise the packers, my secretary, my wife, that without me the move will stop, the world will stop. But outside the controlled environment of the office building—its cold blue light, its constant temperature, its acoustic insulation, its sleek plastic surfaces—the world whirls, sunlight bounces between buildings and sidewalks, spring breezes toss scraps of paper, a man chases his hat down the street, skirts billow, cab drivers shout and honk their horns, a luncheonette exhausts the smell of hamburger. . . . I decide to walk, enjoying the truth all around me, this sodium pentathol world. Several times on the way home I spit blood into the gutter. *Le sang a ses raisons. . .*

At home there has been progress. Cartons are piled high. The bookshelves are empty. The packers are now wrapping the smaller works of art. My wife watches with magic marker poised. The house is beginning to look naked.

"How did it go?" she asks.

"Painlessly," I answer, having no choice but to tell the truth. "The nurse said it will hurt later when the sodium pentathol wears off. Just the opposite of the theory that the truth hurts—it doesn't hurt at all."

However, knowing that it will, I take a tablet of codeine with a martini, before eating a soft lunch of scrambled eggs. Then I sign some letters and checks and go to bed, intending to nap for an hour. When I awaken the children are home from school. My secretary, the packers, the cartons of books and small art are all gone. New cartons, not yet set up, are piled in the hall.

It is my first full day in the apartment. Carrying an attaché case filled with dust rags, I say good morning to the doorman and elevator operators. Like the attaché case, the words are a lie. It is not a good morning. It is unseasonably hot, and my jaw aches. I open the apartment door. There are more false good mornings: half a dozen workmen are drinking coffee on my time.

In the gallery more than a hundred cartons are stacked three-high in double rows. I glance at a couple of the top cartons. One is marked "K-L," another, this one in my wife's handwriting, "SMALL ART." I flee the bulging cartons, the empty shelves.

By comparison, the office area looks manageable. The furniture is already placed. There are only some twenty cartons. I take off my

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jacket and roll up my sleeves. By the time my secretary arrives, all the cartons are open and a quarter of them are empty. My reference books are on their shelves, my lamp and clock are on the desk. I spend the rest of the morning helping her place files, stationery, supplies, typewriter, duplicator, calculator, electric pencil sharpener. . . . I find an electrician to extend the cord on the typewriter, a carpenter to rearrange the shelving in her closet, a painter to do minor touch-ups. By one, she announces, "We're in business."

She may be. I'm not. There are still cartons to empty in my own office and, of course, those dozens in the gallery. I need fuel.

I wash, roll down my sleeves, put on my jacket, say good afternoon to the elevator operators and doorman, cross the street to the shady side, and walk west to a small bar and grill on First Avenue. There I am just finishing my second bloody mary when the designer and his assistant appear. The designer is immaculately dressed in a white suit and shirt and loafers, a bright blue ascot. He looks air-conditioned. By comparison his assistant, in an open flowered shirt and bell-bottomed corduroys, looks only primitively ventilated. I ask them to join me for lunch.

"We just got to the apartment after you left," the designer says. "It's really shaping up. I can't wait till the books are on the shelves."

"Me too," I reply.

"And the art," the assistant adds. "That will make so much difference. Very important how it's hung. I see clusters here and there, and large expanses of empty wall."

I see my sandwich, perfectly centered on the plate, with a pile of french fries on one side, cole slaw on the other—all appetizingly old-fashioned.

I have too many books. Too many that I've read but barely remember. Too many that I never finished. Too many that I'll never start. More, surely, than I can ever finish. Each book, as I place it on the shelf, reminds me of my failing memory or my lack of perseverance or my neglect. All, even the books I've loved, are like enemy scalps, wall decorations commemorating past victories, present defeats.

Tearing at filament tape and cardboard, I attack the cartons as they are placed, in no particular order. I want first only to create a

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space in which to work. Squeezing each book tight so the pages won't be bent, I dust around the edges, place it alphabetically on a shelf above the third level of cartons, knowing that later, when I've cleared enough cartons to get to the lower shelves, it will have to be shifted, that the alphabetical fragment of which it is a part will have to join the rest of the alphabet still waiting in cartons.

I am, arbitrarily, among the P's, chided by an Anthony Powell title: *Books Do Furnish A Room*. Have I criticized my wife for being too possessive and too interested in decor? I am the same. We should be married, live together, move together. We deserve each other. Later, among the C's, I am chided by Céline's *Castle to Castle*. Not only haven't I read this novel, but its title seems, again, to describe my present activity, its "irrelevance," as they say these days. Yes, I feel aggressively irrelevant. I wish Dr. Destouches were here to discuss my problem with.

I have filled a K-L shelf, the one of P's, the one of C's, another of T's. It is slow going. The workmen have left. My secretary has left. I am alone with my six thousand books on my desert island, wondering once again if perhaps I am traveling too heavy. I imagine tossing the books one by one out of the window, watching them float down the river to public libraries, universities, hospitals. . . Is a potlatch still a potlatch if subsidized by government tax-deductions? Slicing off the building above the ground floor is a grander fantasy.

I return home and have three martinis. I listen to my wife's day. She has spent it going through old letters, trying to decide which to pack. She has decided by packing them all. Her day has been like mine. During dinner the children talk about school. They hate it. They, too, have lived a decisionless day.

Before the packing began, I put aside a few books. I try to read one that has been on the shelf for more than ten years: Frank Jenkins' *Architect and Patron*. The words swim in my tired gin- and vermouth-soaked mind.

> . . . the architect-client relation does not always follow such an easy course as that between the doctor and his patient. When a man consults his doctor the circumstances are generally not of the happiest, the former is in some sort of danger and is prepared to put himself with complete trust in the hands of his professional adviser. He does not presume to argue with the doctor's advice. When the man engages an architect, the position is normally quite different. He feels with justification that he is employing someone to carry out his wishes; he seldom

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seems to realize that his architect is—or should be—capable of interpreting those wishes more clearly than he can himself.

Ah, yes, the happy, healthy need for an architect. I mark the passage, think of showing it to my wife, put the book aside, look through a pile of accumulated magazines, can't read these either, can barely concentrate on the pictures in them. I wash up, go to bed, try one of the magazines again, fail again, turn out the light, try to sleep, fail once more, think: *A doctor tries to cure the patient's illness, a designer tries to express it. . . . La maison a ses raisons. . . .*

My wife asks, "Would you like me to read to you?"

"Yes."

This is a sure soporific. She has a reading voice entirely different from her speaking voice. The former was learned in grade school from a teacher who emphasized emphasis. Each word is given great weight. She begins:

"The/ high/ cost/ to/ American/ business/ and/ industry/ of/ alcoholism/ among/ employees/ has/ caused/ a/ growing/ number/ of/ companies/ to/ take/ action. . . ."

I am on my way, smothered as if by the weight of twenty-two blankets.

"The/ Cambridge/ Mass./ consulting/ concern/ of/ Arthur/ D./ Little/ Inc./ estimates/ that/ 4/ ./ 5/ million/ American/ workers/ suffer/ from. . . . What did I say?"

"workers suffer from"

". . . companies/ lose/ 8/ billion/ dollars/ a/ year. . . . 32/ million/ dollars/ each/ working/ day. . . ."

Each word is in its carton marked FRAGILE . . . HANDLE WITH CARE . . . THIS SIDE UP. . . .

I sleep for about two hours, awaken, ask my wife, "Are you asleep?"

"No."

It is my turn to play soporific. I make exhausted love. Now my wife is asleep. I smoke, thinking about the remaining books, the small art in cartons that I have pushed aside, those pictures that will have to be hung, the larger ones yet to come. . . .

On my way to the apartment I meet a neighbor I haven't seen in many weeks. He asks, "What are you doing?"

"I'm moving."

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"I know about that. I mean, what new project, new book, are you working on? You look tired. Have you lost weight?"

"A few pounds," I say, knowing it's close to ten.

"Better take it easy. Why'd you want to move anyway?"

"I don't remember."

That's true. Of course I remember the reasons I had—the better space, the greater efficiency, the better view, the greater security (everything seemed better or greater then)—but I don't remember why or if I thought these things were important enough to trade for so many days, nights, pounds, a tooth.

As I arrange the books, I wonder if, knowing what I know now, I would have made the move. With each book I put on the shelf, my doubts expand and go far beyond the immediate lost time, lost weight, lost tooth. There is a more general lost confidence. I am no longer sure about my relationship to my wife, my children, my work. All are pulling in different directions. All must be reexamined, rearranged, like the books, the art, the furnishings.

This evening, I decide that if possible, if I have the energy, I will try to write, try to present what a move means in terms of past experience, present irritation, future reorientation. I am full of ideas about moving as a metaphor for life, for writing itself. I see it, like life, like writing, as a re-arrangement of experience. Each carton is packed with three-dimensional experience, ready to be opened, dusted, replaced, reseen.

Moving as a metaphor for life? I wonder. No, moving *is* life, just as a pen moving across paper is life, or the fingers moving over typewriter keys. Though the movement is circumscribed—by the 8½″ × 11″ dimensions of a sheet of paper or by a few city blocks—the possibilities are infinite. Infinity is not a metaphor.

I still have three-quarters of the books to do, but I leave earlier than the previous evening, determined to go home and write. As I walk the few blocks, I smile thinking about how my wife will admire my coming home from a hard day's work and sitting down to write. She has often complimented me on my discipline, my will, my courage. Though I've told her that for me writing is a compulsion, she doesn't believe it, won't understand that I have no choice, that particularly at this moment, after weeks of not writing, I am suffering from something like withdrawal symptoms, that I must write, must confess.

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She is in my daughter's bedroom, helping her pack toys and dolls.

"I'm going to write for a couple of hours before dinner," I tell them.

"Good," my wife replies. "You're more agreeable when you're writing."

There are no compliments, no congratulations. She has changed. *She* is more agreeable when I am writing.

I make a martini and drink it slowly while staring at the legal pad before me, as empty as an unfurnished apartment. I can't decide if I want to begin a story (what's redundantly called autobiographical fiction) or simply a journal entry (what should be called fictionalized autobiography). I make another martini, sip it. If it's going to be a story, the first marks on the sheet are easy: my name and address at the upper lefthand corner. I write these, using for the first time my new address, the address to which a check or a rejection slip will be sent. Now, if I had a title, I could proceed halfway down the page. *Moving,* I write, thinking of it as a working title. I have completed half a page in half an hour. I have only to decide now where a move begins, and begin it.

My mind is still full of ambitious ideas. I will make the general idea of moving transcend my specific move. I will make materialism transcend my materials, possessiveness transcend my possessions. Big ideas will transcend little ideas. Big things will transcend little things. . .

I will . . . not write another word for the next half hour. The word *Moving* sits still on the page. I will . . . make another martini. . . .

Perhaps I should be working in my journal, collecting notes for the transcendent moving story I will write. I open the notebook, the twenty-sixth fat, typed, single-spaced volume of my life as I wish others to think I've led it. (The first twenty-five volumes are already lined up on a closet shelf in my new office, more than a million words, preserved less for future reference than present need to get them out of the way.) My last journal entry is dated more than two months ago, the longest lapse ever.

I make another martini, take out another legal pad, date the upper righthand corner (it is by this device that my secretary can tell my so-called non-fiction from my so-called fiction) and scribble: *All writers would write alike if they didn't drink different drinks.* I wonder if

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that will ever fit into the piece I intend to write about moving or if, like that other million words, mostly unused, I want these only packed away. *Le corps a ses raisons* . . .

There is a knock on the door. "Dinner," my son says. No one from Porlock was ever more welcome. I am being told that it's time to move.

It is a week later. The books are on the shelves. I am hanging the art. I have lost a few more pounds. My fingers are cracked and cut from constant dusting, washing, tearing at filament tape and, even worse now, adjusting picture wire. If Captain John East is a hero, the inventor of picture wire is a villain—a German-American, no doubt, with a mind of steel in many strands, all twisted and knotted. By the light of an oil lamp I can see this bloody-fingered fiend working in his nineteenth-century tool shop. I watch the expression on his glinting bespectacled face, impatience turning to rage, the infamous night he strangles his wife and children. . . .

One day twists into the next. The small art is up. The large art arrives. I pound picture hooks into the walls, trying to get the art off the floor before the final wave of cartons, furniture, family. . . . If only I could hang hooks in the center of wall panels, nowhere else. If only I were that innocent. If only I had never heard of Mondrian. But, like the designers, I have heard of him. His ghost is more real than those of John East and The Inventor of Picture Wire. It is neither heroic nor villainous but here, in my mind, in black and white and primary colors. Too often I struggle for asymmetrical balance, matching small pictures against large ones, measuring the weight of surrounding voids against that of surrounded art. The wall is my canvas, the ruler as much my divining rod as Mondrian's. Like The Immaculate Dutchman, like my own designers, I am cleaning up, moving from one mess to create an environment for the next.

Just before noon, the first van appears and parks on the side street below my office window. The mover says that he and his men will break for lunch, then unload this van, and go back to our house for the last load, mostly furniture.

"Good afternoon. . . Good afternoon. . . Good afternoon. . ." Once again I am on my way, out the door and down the block, to

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the bar and grill. I must walk quickly, eat quickly to be back in time to receive our possessions.

By now the bartender recognizes me.

"The usual?"

"Yes," I answer emphatically. The unusual has disappeared from my life, my vocabulary. I live only in a world of books, dust, cardboard cartons, pictures, picture wire, picture hooks. . . .

"What's new?" he asks as he slides my drink to me.

I smile as if I have a secret. The bartender understands. He is paid to understand. For a split-second we live in the same world, use the same words. But, as his reciprocal smile spreads into a leer, I realize that his vocabulary is as limited as mine, that what's new can only be a woman. What else could account for my lost weight? . . . He is discreet. He doesn't press. He's there to listen, only if I want to talk.

I do. I leave the bar, drop a dime in the phone, and dial home.

"I'm just having a bite—a swallow. The movers will begin unloading the van in about half an hour. I guess you'll get to the apartment later in the afternoon—"

"Not before evening. You have no idea of what it's like here. There are packing materials all over the place. You can have your boozy lunch. I have to clean up. I don't have time to talk."

"Another?" the bartender asks.

"Yes," I reply as emphatically as before.

The moving men begin to bring in the cartons, dozens of them marked "KITCHEN," five of these sub-marked "BENNINGTON," which are handled with great care—the men have their instructions from my wife—more care than the sixteen of "LIQUOR," the two of "CANDLESTICKS," the two of "ASHTRAYS," the three of "MATCH STRIKERS." Three cartons of match strikers! How these small objects sneak into our lives and accumulate. It is easier to resist an antique dentist's sign.

I watch for the large wardrobe cartons, remove the clothes on hangers and transfer them to closets, fish shoes from the bottom of these wardrobes. It seems right that we have more shoes than match strikers. But a hundred and fifty pair for a family of four—that's excessive. Everything is excessive: the number of suits, dresses, coats, hats (also thrown into the wardrobes), belts (looped over hangers). . . .

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Cartons are coming in more quickly now, two and three at a time, light ones that can be tossed around: "BLANKETS," "PILLOWS," "CUSHIONS," "QUILTS," "LINENS," "TOYS," "DOLLS."

The moving men leave. I finish putting what I can into closets. I line up the empty wardrobes for the men to take away when they come back. I find cartons of my shirts, sweaters, underwear, socks, handkerchiefs and unpack these as I wait for the movers to return.

A little after three the phone rings. It is my wife. She tells me that the movers say they can't possibly finish by four, that they will need at least four hours of overtime or that they can complete the job in the morning on regular time. What's to be done? The beds are there, the bedding is here. The food is there, the dishes are here. She, the children, the maid are there, I am here.

"We've been had," I tell my wife. "But I don't want to go through another day of this. Let me speak to the mover." He gets on. "What are we talking about *in dollars?*" I ask in the kind of tough voice I imagine guys at the Pentagon use.

He computes the difference between regular time and overtime. I agree to a figure. The van rolls, loaded with furniture, plants, a few suitcases, last things.

A taxi follows. In it are my wife, her jewelry, the children, the maid, and two thermopaks of food from the refrigerator. Almost immediately my wife tells me that she forgot some things in the freezer, that she will get them the next day.

"Forgot!" I reply. "You want to go back."

"Don't you?"

"No. Never. It's past."

"The house is part of our lives. You can't just chop it off."

"You can't hang onto it either."

She smiles, too tired to bicker. Her smile is filled with exhaustion and mystery. She will, I know, try not to let go of the house for a little longer.

It takes a week to open all the cartons, unwrap their contents, and put things in place. It is like a Christmas for which we have given ourselves everything we want—and more, much more. There is the surprise of unwrapping things and seeing them as if for the first time. And there is also, hidden inside corrugated paper and jiffy pads, so much duplication, waste, guilt.

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Our possessions not only possess us, they move us. These things take over, each demanding its place. The Bennington plates and bowls and pitchers spread out in the glass kitchen cabinets. The match strikers and ashtrays claim tables throughout the apartment. Candlesticks and small art objects fill open shelves. Cushions and pillows find their chairs and couches. The furniture itself asks to be moved six inches this way or that, wanting enough space, wanting to be made comfortable.

Old things begin to look new in their new setting, the new setting itself begins to look old. The apartment starts to "look like home." The collective magnitude of our possessions shrinks as each piece is distributed, appearing to be only what is needed in a given place.

What my wife and I do and what the children do is different not only in scale. They get settled autonomously and pretty much duplicate the rooms they had in the house. Our son sets up his drums and hi-fi equipment, arranges his records and tapes, puts up his posters. The look, the feel, the sound of his room are all familiar, only the view outside has changed. Our daughter, too, recreates her past environment. The stuffed animals are at the head of her bed, the dolls on the couch and chairs, the miniature furniture grouped as always on open shelves. But they have worked alone, as already they play alone; I have only helped them hang a few pictures and move some heavy pieces of furniture. My wife and I have worked, continue to work, hope to play, together. Ours is a collaboration, much more with each other than with the designers. Everywhere we look there is our controlled clutter, our compromise between the functional and decorative. What we have done, what we are continuing to do reminds us of our need for each other. More than with any painting or piece of furniture, we see each other freshly. Why don't we, too, look new in our new setting?—our final setting, I think, as I have thought in each of our previous homes.

The closing on the house is substantially a repetition of the closing on the apartment. This time we meet in the mortgage department of a Wall Street bank. There are a few more people present, a few more papers to sign. When everything is done, I turn over the keys to our house.

"That's a lot of money for a bunch of keys," the young executive says, laughing.

I explain how the shunt key on the alarm system works: "Before

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you open the front door, you turn the shunt lock from a vertical to a horizontal position. Once you're inside, you turn the switch, on the alarm box, from on to off. Then you turn the shunt back to vertical and, if you want the alarm on, you turn the switch on again. In addition, there's a release switch above the inside of the front door—"

"I'll be glad to go back to the house and show you," my wife tells them.

Later, when she returns from the house, their house now, she says, "It's so sad, all those empty rooms, empty shelves, empty picture hooks, empty frames of dirt where the pictures hung—I want to get this place really finished before we go to the Cape."

"But you can't, you know that. There's work that has to be done during the summer—the vanity and sink in our bathroom, the linen on the dining room walls, the hardware for the sliding doors of the storage walls, paint touch-ups, missing electrical fixtures—"

"If we stayed an extra week—"

"You still wouldn't finish. You'd just be in the workmen's way. And besides the new furniture won't be delivered till late in the summer."

"I don't want to leave. You go ahead with the children. I'll stay here for a week or two."

"I want to leave. I want you to leave. I want to get back to work. I can't do that and open the house on the Cape and take care of the children. I need you."

"To do those jobs?"

"That too. But more. You decorate our life."

"You haven't told me anything like that in a long time."

"I thought it was obvious."

"I thought you thought only I needed you."

On the drive to the Cape she still talks about how sad she is to leave the apartment, how much work still remains to be done. Her mood doesn't change until we cross Buzzards Bay. Then she begins talking about the antique shops in Sandwich. . . Barnstable. . . Yarmouth. . . Dennis. . . Brewster. . . . There are so many things she needs—little things, she emphasizes.

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PO FEI HUANG

I Stand Still

I stand still.
The window is on
my back. Behind
the window, is the
maple, behind the
maple, the sun.

On the green carpet
in my living room
are the shadows of
the moving branches.

It's February in
deep snow.

Past;
future;
present.

I take part in creating this moment—
the earth into heaven.

Got to Take This Step

Got to take this step.
Turn my head, leaves
all have fallen. Yesterday:
yellow, green, red; now:
trunk, branches, bare.

Trunk, branches, bare:

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Got to take this step.
Frost has turned into snow,
dew (has turned) into ice.

Warm is still this path.
Snow must be swept;
ice must be removed;
people will use it as usual.

A Creation

1

I'm making a world
in my picture which
you may share, if you
care—not to disturb.

2

Walk in, I need a smile
to be the color brightening
up the canvas.

3

This is the sky;
This, the springtime.
This is our world.

4

The last touch is done.
A sigh of admiration.
You stand next to me,
a creation.

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Poetry

I sit here and try
to recollect what is
and what is not dead.

A poem on a scrap of
paper I left on the desk.
My father read it and said:
"This is too sad for a child."

He forbade me to write again
in poetry. I noticed one night
when I awoke, he was chanting
the poem he wrote. His voice
was clearly different.

I didn't know why
I fell in love with poetry.
It was my love, has been
and will always be.
Through it my mother is
always living with me.

Morning in the Woodland

Allow me to be
one of you, half
sleeping still, being
softened by the
morning mist—
none of you has ever
missed, then be ready,
for the faithful
sun to make
a wonderful day.

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ROBIN FULTON

Outlook

At last the clear view I've had
all winter is closed.

The trees are no longer ghosts
flaunting their transparency
but now fill out with green
and stand like broad conspirators
between me and what I've seen.

The eye is not merciful.
It reads your face like a sheet of braille
but won't rest there: it sees
always beyond your loving shoulder
inhuman distances.

I cultivate its weakness,
send it into the wanton traps
of a flowering cherry branch and watch
a world and its after-images blur:
nothing clear is out of reach.

Short-sighted at last
I count out each minute by touch.

The Change

"A clean break—that's what you need."
Dry twigs and old ties snap.

I hear the rain, wonder how to count
single drops in the hushed toneless glissandi.

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And thinking of all the music I've listened to
how it also has seeped down like the rain

I imagine an impervious stratum where
it all gathers in a black reservoir

with the power to rise slowly again, a world
barometer keeping its promise of "change."

We'll notice nothing till one morning the fields
reflect the sky, each calm breath

a nuance colouring hundreds of square miles
like a sudden remote key in Beethoven.

Midsummer Nights

Past midnight, the sky already white:
soft clouds can't stop, pines
sway from the waist, aspens hiss.

My house
when at last I reach it looks at me
with the pallor of someone close to death.
I must sleep, I fumble with dark blinds,
imagine the walls going transparent,
mutter *if only the mirrors could be black.*

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BARRY SPACKS

Teaching the Penguins to Fly

The penguins must have had it once,
some drive and wingspan, back before
they joined up in committees to waddle
on slow-moving icebergs, flapping rhetorical
vans. My daughter's first ambition
was teaching them to fly, and she hasn't
forgotten: a poster of Emperor penguins
hangs on her bedroom wall where Beatles
still remain, and Aquarius,
her sign—the fuzzy young and vaguely
gazing adults, all of them look
like kids who've lost their expedition
leader. Emperors. Most of them show
color enough at the neck for the mythseeking
eye to propose, from vestigial yellows,
ancestor roc-macaws. Fifteen,
already the culture-heroine knows
it's nothing like easy to start them moving:
she'll leap and flap her arms to teach
the huge idea: up on the toes,
higher, higher, lift those wings!—
trials down ice-slicked runways and lengthy
political sessions, building the Movement,
until the strongest risk the winter
sky, shedding their dickies, becoming
through generations enormous budgies
who sing in the jungle, in general bird,
the epic tale of the odd liberator
in shirt and jeans who beat the air
with her arms, who sang them
Woody Guthrie, who
brought the revolution
uncramping their lives.

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Globed Thistles

Like nobles by the path they stand:
the king will come, and look like them:
these tall, blue-headed thistles, being
exactly who they are, a splendor
of hardihood, unwillingness
to charm or bend or pass as a soft-petaled
saint of the hollows. When I reach
the england of my settled years,
the sun and the moon in their traces, still
I'll know these highland hedgehogs as my
cousins, bright in their fiber, hearts-
of-fire that rise slim-stalked to stare
their sister sun, the very sun
in the face: a pride
of thistles.

VERN RUTSALA

Access Road

Slowly at first, dully
I begin to look,
feeling my way along the edge
of town, fingering the city limits
for flaws, looking for some
hole in the wire,
some gap in district lines
and soon I'm out,
slipping through a crack
in the zoning laws,
out and gliding low
over dewy meadows,

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heading fast for Idaho,
remembering those old summer nights
clear as a bell and cold as hell.
I beat the bushes,
I run my hand over surfaces
feeling for gravel,
picking up dirt and sniffing
for the old volcanic smell,
searching for any hint
searching for the old road
to the farm
long overgrown, long ago
given back to the woods.
I worm my way across posted fields.
I trespass on government lands
past storage dumps
and oil pumps, clawing
my slow way
until like the secret source
of a river
a few pebbles signal
the beginning.
They rattle like dice.
They are my precious gems
and soon they increase.
I walk crunching the gravel,
holding my breath for the bend in the road,
the bend that promises
and withholds everything.

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RUTH FAINLIGHT

Views

Here in my London room, closed-in, facing a blank wall
From a back window, I can see almost nothing.
An angled section of sky, mould-patterns on bricks,
And when they're lit-up, other flats' bathrooms and
kitchens:
Glimpses of strangers' interiors. The poems
I write here become more explicit, yet somehow
Discursive. Though I notice the birds in the park
And the faces of people, it seems that the view
From my own room decides what I think about.

In the country, my desk stands between two windows,
And whichever I look from, there are trees, fields,
Wide soft changing clouds that drift across the meadows.
On holiday I feel like someone who was blind,
From whose eyes the bandage has only been lifted.
Yet there, despite the abundance outside, I touch depths
Of despair which afterwards I can barely express
Or even remember. It's as if I'm imprisoned
And trapped; the poetry comes dense and wild.

I'm not trying to reach a conclusion, or argue
One state is truer. I am seeking the connection
Which goes deeper than vision—beyond any beauty
Or influence. As the moon brightens and fades,
Shows first a silver, placid disk, impersonal
As a mirror—then darkens away, but still is present—
I celebrate the absolute glory of words
In every style possible: reflecting on the world,
And all the different aspects of its nature.

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STEPHEN FARBER

The Vanishing Heroine

DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS college film departments have been offering courses on the role of women in film, though the sad fact is that in contemporary American movies women have no role. Even the most philistine critics have begun to complain about the monotony of all-male action films, the repetitious celebration of male camaraderie. The Academy Award for 1973 went to *The Sting*, only one in a long line of popular movies without a major female role. In addition to the chaste love affair of Paul Newman and Robert Redford, moviegoers have been treated to a growing number of male romances: *Papillon* (Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman), *Uptown Saturday Night* (Sidney Poitier and Bill Cosby), *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* (Clint Eastwood and Jeff Bridges), *California Split* (Elliott Gould and George Segal). In *Serpico* Al Pacino battles police corruption single-handed; the "love interest" is a nurse who pops up once in a while to tell him to be careful. On the program given to the press at screenings of *The Longest Yard*—a popular football-in-prison melodrama—the biggest female role is one called "Warden's Secretary." *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* and *Death Wish* are two more celebrations of revenge and brutality, where women exist only to be raped or murdered.

The current emphasis on violence and male camaraderie is not new in itself. The American action directors—John Ford, Howard Hawks, Raoul Walsh, William Wellman—all concentrated on male friendships, groups of men in danger; their Hemingway-influenced fables dripped maudlin machismo. It would not be entirely fair to dismiss these movies as latent homosexual fantasies, though they certainly have homoerotic overtones. In Wellman's silent film *Wings* (the first Academy Award winner), the most highly-charged moment is the farewell scene between the two pilots, when Buddy Rogers strokes the dying Richard Arlen's face and finally kisses him passionately on the lips—a weird necrophile homosexuality. Similarly, in *Kings Row* Robert Cummings returns home from European medical school to find his chum, Ronald Reagan, bed-ridden and crippled; Cummings sits on the bed and embraces Reagan, and Ann Sheridan, smiling beatifically, leaves the room and closes the door on the two boyfriends. One doesn't need a terribly wild Freudian imagination—just a sense of humor—to wonder about their relationship, or about the strong friendships of all those fearless flyers, barracks buddies, big game hunters, and aging cowboys who populate our movies.

Repressed homosexuality may be one explanation for these movies, but most of them are actually asexual, terrified of adult sexuality of any kind; the buddies retreat into a childlike world where women do not exist as

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challenges, and where no commitment has to be intense or enduring. "The urge to return to childhood," writes critic Molly Haskell, "is deeply ingrained in the American psyche . . . It is the escape valve from the responsibilites and disillusionments—particularly the disillusionments—of marriage and family, of growing up and old."

In the past, however, women were not totally excluded from these infantile masculine fantasies. In the movies of Hawks and Walsh, women threatened the male friendships, and although the directors regarded the sexual contest with ambivalence, at least they created strong, spirited heroines who could hold their own against the men. Today's directors seem so frightened of women that the only ones they introduce are bit-players—hookers or kooks or loyal girlfriends who hide in the shadow of their men. Bewildered by the women's movement, many writers and directors no longer know what kind of heroines to create. If they present an overly aggressive heroine, insecure middle American audiences may resent her. On the other hand, if they portray women as sex objects or happy housewives, they are sure to be blasted by the angry, articulate feminist critics. They have decided that the safest decision is to eliminate women altogether and focus on the masculine tests of courage that contemporary moviegoers—both male and female—seem to adore.

Considering the dearth of women on the screen, it is not surprising that a number of feminist writers have turned to the past, to trace the popular fantasies about women that have been reflected in movies, and to remind us of the remarkable heritage of screen heroines that contemporary filmmakers have betrayed. The two most comprehensive of these studies[1] come to similar conclusions about the decline of the American screen heroine. Rosen's book is the more ambitious and the more superficial of the two. Trying to compose an entire social history of the twentieth century as well as a history of the movies, she collects an intriguing potpourri of information—excerpts from popular magazines and pulp novels, statistics about working women, biographical data on directors and stars, Hollywood gossip, and occasionally, some analysis of the movies themselves. Ranging over an extraordinary number of films from the earliest two-reelers to the most recent efforts of Andy Warhol and Stanley Kubrick, Rosen loses control of her subject, hurriedly jumping from film to film as she skims along the surface. Rosen is best when discussing the screen images of the major female stars, but she offers too many glib sociological generalizations, and as a critic she is disturbingly naive.

Again and again Rosen scores early films for failing to express a contemporary radical feminist point of view. Ideology takes precedence over aesthetic discrimination and historical perspective. For example, Lubitsch's 1926 comedy *The Marriage Circle* is criticized because its heroine "is ultimately useless as a symbol of feminine liberation." Revealing her

[1] POPCORN VENUS, by *Marjorie Rosen*. Coward, McCann and Geoghegan. $9.95. FROM REVERENCE TO RAPE, by *Molly Haskell*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. $10.00.

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prejudices, Rosen writes, "Hollywood would not permit its films to refine or consolidate the image of women, nor,with its conservatism, would it even attempt to educate or offer female alternatives." Rosen concentrates almost exclusively on movies' "educational" or propagandistic value, and her artistic judgments are consistently short-sighted. *Spellbound,* one of Hitchcock's poorer movies, is singled out for praise because of its positive treatment of a professional woman, the psychiatrist played by Ingrid Bergman. Later Rosen exalts an atrociously made Katharine Hepburn movie, *The Rainmaker,* for "the decade's most provocative and sympathetic portrait of the Woman Alone," and ranks its writer, N. Richard Nash, above Tennessee Williams. Rosen praises a movie if she agrees with its message, but her single-minded political credo blinds her to the subtler virtues of other movies. She criticizes the subservience of the Julie Harris character in *East of Eden* but never mentions the proud madam played by Jo Van Fleet, a woman who ran away from marriage because her husband could not tolerate her independence. Enumerating the charming but rather frivolous gamines and waifs that Audrey Hepburn played in the fifties, Rosen overlooks Hepburn's best role—in *The Nun's Story,* one of the rare movies about the intellectual and emotional growth of a talented woman. And Rosen angrily attacks the female self-hatred evident in Elaine May's ferocious mockery of her own daughter, Jeannie Berlin, in *The Heartbreak Kid,* but fails to recognize that the movie as a whole is conceived as a satiric exposé of the vanity, cruelty, and emptiness of the *male* hero. Throughout her book Rosen conveniently ignores complexities in films that might undermine her simplistic political analysis.

One of Rosen's most persuasive points is that American movies have never reflected the real achievements of women, or their unique problems. For example, women who had assumed men's jobs during World War II were laid off by the millions when Johnny came marching home, but no film ever acknowledged the phenomenon. Hollywood made movies about the problems of the returning war veterans, but none about the problems of readjustment for their working wives. It is worth remembering that movies have almost always been conceived from a male point of view, and have perpetuated demeaning stereotypes of women. But Molly Haskell, though acknowledging many of the same distortions that Rosen criticizes, also makes a convincing case for the range and depth of American screen heroines through the forties. Her priorities are different from Rosen's; she considers herself "a film critic first and a feminist second . . . art will always take precedence over sociology, the unique over the general."

Haskell is a perceptive film critic, and a cogent writer with a sense of the complexities in film history, and in the careers of important directors and stars. Unfortunately, her book is as carelessly organized as Rosen's. She strings together a random collection of insights, generalizations about women as well as about movies, and she lurches from subject to subject without ordering her arguments. The book has many memorable passages—on the misogyny of silent comedy, or the ambivalence in Hitchcock's view of women, for example—but one cannot escape the

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feeling that *From Reverence to Rape* is the first draft of a book that has not yet been completed.

Like Rosen, Haskell tends to concentrate on broad discussions of female stars, and she rarely gets around to detailed analysis of individual films. Also, since she is—like her husband, Andrew Sarris—a devotée of the *auteur* theory, irrational cult biases weaken her case. The unfashionable John Huston is contemptuously dismissed, while the *auteur* critics' idol Howard Hawks is treated as if he were on a level with Shakespeare. In one of her more hyperbolic assertions, Haskell compares the perfectly charming Bogart-Bacall relationship in Hawks' *To Have and Have Not* to the relationship of Millamant and Mirabell in *The Way of the World,* as well as to that of Emma Woodhouse and Knightley in Jane Austen's *Emma.* Other cult favorites—Douglas Sirk's soap opera *All That Heaven Allows,* and Nicholas Ray's ludicrous lesbian Western *Johnny Guitar*—are praised in equally lofty, unconvincing terms.

Nevertheless, Haskell provides an important balance to Rosen by paying tribute to all the witty, sensual, independent heroines of American movies. Her main thesis is stated early in the book: "Here we are today, with an unparalleled freedom of expression and a record number of women performing, achieving, choosing to fulfill themselves, and we are insulted with the worst—the most abused, neglected, and dehumanized—screen heroines in film history." By way of contrast, Haskell reminds us of the raucous, bawdy heroines of Jean Harlow and Mae West; the thirties' slightly androgynous women of mystery—Garbo and Dietrich; the spunky career women—Katharine Hepburn, Jean Arthur, Rosalind Russell; the imposing murderesses of the forties—Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Barbara Stanwyck. As Haskell observes, these movies may have ended with women sacrificing their careers for marriage, or punished for their aggressiveness, but what audiences remember from the movies are not the sanctimonious conclusions, but the images of strong, vibrant women sparring quite expertly with their men.

A great many of these early films, while not necessarily at the level of Jane Austen, still stand up because of their sophisticated vision of sexual relationships and of women. Ernst Lubitsch created a whole gallery of unconventional heroines—from Miriam Hopkins' sly jewel thief in *Trouble in Paradise* to Jennifer Jones' enthusiastic lady plumber in *Cluny Brown.* Hawks' best comedy, and the best of the newspaper comedies, *His Girl Friday,* pits Cary Grant against Rosalind Russell in one of the wittiest sexual battles in movies. The moment when Russell, who intends to give up her career for marriage to a "good" man, finally surrenders to the excitement of the newsroom again, is a neat refutation of feminine stereotypes. In the thirties and forties Bette Davis made a number of movies—like the romantic *Now, Voyager* and the histrionic *Beyond the Forest*—that, although soap operatic in style, often dealt with a woman's growth of consciousness, and her struggle to find an identity outside marriage. Similarly, Barbara Stanwyck often transcended the Black Widow roles in which she was cast to suggest the fascination and

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complexity of the ruthless, strong-willed woman. Consider one of her lesser-known movies, *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers* (quite acidly written by Robert Rossen), an overly melodramatic but still penetrating study of the perverting drive for power, wealth, and success—a story usually told with a male protagonist. George Cukor directed Katharine Hepburn in an equally remarkable series of films. The best of these, *Adam's Rib* (written by Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin), is a still timely feminist comedy about the marriage of two brilliant lawyers, and their explosive courtroom battle when they find themselves on opposite sides of a criminal case.

The forties was the last great era for women in movies. In the fifties women began to recede; they were relegated to the role of housewife and helpmate, or banished altogether from many "prestige" films. Yet there were still some superb women's roles—for example, in Elia Kazan's neglected film about the TVA project, *Wild River*. This movie has two self-reliant heroines—the matriarch Ella Garth (Jo Van Fleet), the embodiment of the stubborn, courageous pioneer spirit, and her granddaughter (Lee Remick), who is unusually forthright and perceptive in her developing relationship with the government agent who has come to evict her family. During the sixties there were a few more memorable roles and performances: Jean Seberg as the seductive schizophrenic girl in *Lilith;* Angela Lansbury as two very different tyrannical mothers in John Frankenheimer's *All Fall Down* and *The Manchurian Candidate;* Anne Brancroft as Annie Sullivan in *The Miracle Worker* and as the freethinking doctor in John Ford's *Seven Women;* Patricia Neal in *Hud;* all of the talented actresses as Mary McCarthy's Vassar girls in *The Group*. Then women's liberation paralyzed the industry.

Many Hollywood observers complain about the shortage of female stars today. But there are plenty of gifted actresses who would be stars if there were any roles for them to play. Several marvelous young American actresses—Joan Hackett, Verna Bloom, Shirley Knight, Sally Kellerman, Cicely Tyson, Tuesday Weld, Blythe Danner, to name just a few—should be getting the range of roles that were once available to Hepburn, Davis, and Crawford. Instead, Verna Bloom, who was unforgettable as the Appalachian woman in *Medium Cool,* and equally convincing as the languid, sophisticated wife in a Los Angeles stage production of Pinter's *Old Times*, has to make do with the role of Robert Duvall's silent mistress—a hatcheck girl—in the trashy police melodrama, *Badge 373*. Sally Kellerman, who should have become a sexy, elegant comedienne in the tradition of Carole Lombard and Claudette Colbert, has not worked since the disastrous musical remake of *Lost Horizon*.

Both Haskell and Rosen suggest that forties melodramas about diabolical murderesses expressed the anxieties of a wartime society where Rosie the Riveter had taken over traditional male roles. But if these nightmare movies conveyed a distorted vision of women, at least they provided juicy, challenging roles for the strong actresses of the period. The anxieties caused by today's women's movement must be much more profound, for filmmakers are trying to deny the challenge by ignoring women. As Molly

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Haskell puts it, "The growing strength and demands of women in real life, spearheaded by women's liberation, obviously provoked a backlash in commercial film: a redoubling of Godfather-like machismo to beef up man's eroding virility or, alternately, an escape into the all-male world of the buddy films from *Easy Rider* to *Scarecrow*."

It must be noted that even European films seem to have fewer interesting heroines than they had ten years ago. Instead of the great heroines of Bergman, Antonioni, and Truffaut, we have the passive sex kittens of *Last Tango in Paris* or *Going Places*. But in America this problem is magnified. Apart from a couple of interesting prostitutes—Julie Christie in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, Jane Fonda in *Klute*—where are the women characters with spirit? Barbra Streisand played a daydreaming but essentially contented housewife in the regressive *Up the Sandbox*. In *The Way We Were*, although she is supposed to be an articulate Jewish radical, she is still an old-fashioned girl who lives through her man; her only role in marriage to WASP Robert Redford is to nag him into becoming a better, more courageous writer. This is one of the characteristics of the new movies: they use women as props, or as sounding-boards for sensitive heroes. The women in movies such as *Bullitt*, *Serpico*, *The Paper Chase*, and *The Gambler* are there simply to ask a few pointed questions of their men; they wait patiently in their bedrooms, and seem to have no outside lives of their own.

The masochistic side of women's lib literature has been represented in such films as *Play It As It Lays* and *Buster and Billie*, one-note chronicles of the exploitation, subjugation, and defeat of women. But there are no screen heroines who have been awakened to new possibilites by the women's movement. It is revealing that the most interesting heroines can be found in movies set in the past. Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*, an overpraised, pretentious detective story, creates a heroine in the *femme fatale* mold of the forties movies and almost brings off the conceit. Faye Dunaway's Evelyn Mulwray is obviously modeled on Mary Astor's treacherous, duplicitous Brigid O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon*, but there is one crucial difference: Brigid was a ruthless, scheming murderess, while Evelyn lies because of her neurotic helplessness. Her disdainful, aristocratic manner is only a façade; she is actually ravaged, vulnerable, and ultimately doomed. Although in her first scenes she resembles the thirties and forties heroine—the woman of style, power, and mystery—she is really a seventies figure, woman as victim. But if she is finally little more than a bundle of familiar feminine neuroses, she is still the only *character* in the cardboard world of *Chinatown*, and thanks to Faye Dunaway's eloquent performance, we remember her after everything else in this posturing movie has faded.

A couple of other period movies have more forceful heroines. *Our Time* was probably meant to cash in on the current fifties revival craze, and it was shot in the mushy soft-focus style of *Summer of '42;* but perhaps because it was written by a woman, Jane Stanton, this story of a girls' boarding school in the fifties has genuine poignancy and bite. The only

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current movie that concentrates on the relationships between women, *Our Time* honors the surprising strength and depth of a friendship between two very different girls, the bright ugly duckling Muffy (Betsy Slade), and the beautiful, popular debutante Abby (Pamela Sue Martin). Muffy is a stock character in American literature and films—the awkward adolescent whose sensitivity is overlooked by all the superficial people who surround her. But whereas Bette Davis' *Now, Voyager* ended with the transformation and triumph of the ugly duckling, *Our Time* caters to the contemporary mood of female masochism and self-pity; Muffy dies from the aftereffects of an abortion performed by an incompetent medical student, a victim of the repressive sexual attitudes of her society. Nevertheless, the role is written and performed with a good deal of humor and verve. Even more interesting is the character of Abby, who begins as a shallow sorority girl but develops in unexpected ways. In her loyalty to Muffy, her appreciation of Muffy's idiosyncratic qualities, and her own ability to learn from Muffy's tragedy, she is one of the few women characters on screen who demonstrates an ability to mature and to survive.

Sidney Lumet's *Lovin' Molly*, an episodic, overly literary, but strangely haunting film, centers on a free-spirited Texas girl in the twenties, who marries one man but continues a relationship with two others over a period of forty years. Molly is a woman who creates her own rules; she scorns the sexual hypocrisy of her time, has little interest in marriage, and unlike one of her lovers, the puritanical Gid, she feels no guilt for her unconventional desires. Molly is actually something of a male fantasy figure; her rebellion is expressed in purely sexual terms. But as performed by Blythe Danner, the character has a dignity and stature that cannot be discounted. Danner's rich, throaty voice, her directness, wry humor and unashamed sensuality put her in the line of the great female stars. These movies offer a little relief from the violent macho fantasies that flood the screen. But there are no stories of contemporary women struggling to reconcile conflicting aspirations and forge a meaningful identity. Television occasionally acknowledges women's problems, but the heroines of TV movies are usually ordinary housewives who begin to question their existence; at best they are small, drab characters. Movies have the chance to tackle more ambitious themes and more extraordinary characters; they should be exploring adult relationships and changing sexual roles, and they should also be creating fantasy characters that women want to believe in—spirited, independent, unorthodox heroines like those played by Katharine Hepburn, Rosalind Russell, or Barbara Stanwyck. But women today have no movies that reflect their concerns, or their fantasies. That means one-half of human experience is no longer represented on the screen.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Photography's Problems

As of 1974 photography had been officially with us for one hundred thirty-five years. Yet even the passage of that much time seems to have been insufficient to resolve the first major argument that arose concerning the medium—whether or not it is an art. One can hardly imagine an amateur of the late sixteenth century pondering a similar question for engraving, now thought to have appeared about the middle of the previous century, or an amateur of the 1930's wondering whether lithography was a viable expressive medium. But if the efforts of a Dürer could legitimize engraving and those of a Toulouse-Lautrec or a Picasso lithography, why has the work of a LeSecq, an Evans, or a Weston not brought the same recognition to photography? The answer to this question is, of course, vastly complex, and has at least four important aspects: theoretical, visual, historical, and critical.

The theoretical considerations underlying the traditional denigration of photography are largely concerned with its use of a mechanical device. Despite the best efforts of the arts and crafts people, or perhaps because of them, it is inconceivable in many quarters that any object created partly or wholly by machine can be a work of art. Here, alone, the complexities and contradictions are innumerable. One finds, for example, individuals perfectly willing to accept as art a piece of sculpture by Tony Smith that has been ordered from a factory by telephone (whether or not they like it) who cannot similarly accept an image captured mechanically, although that image may result from an intense act of vision on the part of its creator and have been extensively manipulated by him before and/or after its creation. Similarly, minds able to accept such mechanical aids as cameras obscura and perspective frames as were used by Dürer, Van Gogh, and others, may balk at the idea of such aids recording as well as capturing the image. Characteristically in such paradoxical situations, it passes largely unnoticed that many photographs are made without cameras at all or that for example, the Corot cliché-verres admired in museum print rooms are produced by a photographic process identical to that used by many photographers who were not also famous painters.

The visual difficulties encountered by photography are somewhat subtler and, while just as effective in practice, are less often verbalized. They are related to the same difficulty that makes prints and drawings inaccessible to people interested mainly in painting and sculpture. Between the graphic media and painting there is an important difference not only in size but in emotional scale; to pass from one to the other requires a readjustment of mental set. While technical matters are no more central to the quality of prints than to that of paintings, they are generally more

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noticed by those concerned with prints and function as a handle with which to come to grips with the image. The finesse so dear to the print connoisseur may be anathema to the painting connoisseur, particularly if he is concerned with contemporary work, and the search for this finesse may be taken as symbolic of the difference in visual approach demanded by the two media. Photography demands yet a third approach, what one first looks for in a photograph—how one approaches the work—being conditioned by its mode of production in such a way as to distinguish it from both painting and the other graphic media. Just as prints and drawings do not usually look well displayed with paintings, photographs do not usually look well displayed with prints. This difference in kind, ultimately a visual difference conditioned by technical matters, remains to be investigated in a sufficiently meaningful manner to make viewing photographs easier for the uninitiated. One finds, thus, print collectors debating whether photography is a graphic medium despite the fact that it must be treated and housed as one and that, like many prints, it is a multiple medium resulting from a negative-positive process.

Photography's historical problems result partly from prejudices generated by its theoretical and visual problems and partly from the fact that those prejudices have kept art historians and critics from exploring the subject with any seriousness or in any detail. Not only do we lack historical information about men and women whose pictures are famous, but the work of many first-rate photographers is now completely unknown (one thinks of Giroux, who exhibited in the Salons of the 1850's but whose work has not been seen publicly, or located, for something like a century and whose name fails to appear in any major history of photography). Major figures of nineteenth-century photography, Nègre, LeSecq, LeGray, and the rest, are only beginning to be investigated in a disciplined way, and the scope of their work remains to be brought fully to light. Historically, also, photography has suffered from the coincidence of its rise with that of the development of processes by which images could be reproduced *ad infinitum*. This coincidence has encouraged a confusion so complete, and so compounded by publications such as *Life*, that even sophisticated minds have failed to grasp the difference between original and reproductive photographs, let alone perceive the visual gulf that separates the two. The fact is that a reproduced photograph is no more faithful to its original than a reproduced painting, the reproduction lacking precisely those elements of life and idiosyncracy characteristic of a work of art.

Finally, the critical problems faced by photography have built a powerful barrier between the medium and its appreciation by a wider public. Although its rise has been coincident with that of art history and art criticism, photography's lack of academic respectability and the fact that it has continued as a figurative art while painting and sculpture have developed into wholly abstract media have meant that it has attracted as its champions few people with sufficient interest and qualifications to forge a meaningful critical vocabulary. It is, thus, an art without an in-

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tellectual tradition, and writers on photography have tended to fall into evocative discussions of subject matter of a sort which has long since been thoroughly unacceptable in relation to painting.

Consider, for example, the book entitled *Looking at Photographs*, subtitled *100 Pictures from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art*, published in 1973 and written by the museum's curator of photography, John Szarkowski.[1] Despite the volume's subtitle and Mr. Szarkowski's introductory claim that it is to serve as a visual précis of the Museum's collection, the title and format (each photograph juxtaposed with a page of text concerning it) clearly suggest that here is a work intended to illuminate the process of viewing photographs, historically, critically, or otherwise, a suggestion reinforced by the chronological arrangement of the pictures. What, then, is one to make of the comment on one of Muybridge's motion photographs that, "One might ask why, in the plate opposite, the model is kicking a pith helmet. Presumably, someone forgot the volleyball, and with 781 pictures to make, substitutions were allowed"? Putting aside the temptation to ask Mr. Szarkowski if he has ever tried to kick a volleyball in bare feet (the female model in the photograph is nude), one wonders precisely what such questions have to do with looking at photographs. Or consider the statement that, "The pictures that [Atget] made in the service of this concept ['understanding and interpreting in visual terms a complex, ancient, and living tradition'] are seductively and deceptively simple, wholly poised, reticent, dense with experience, mysterious, and true." Putting aside, again, the question of what precisely this sentence means, one searches in vain for anything that assists in looking at the photograph, or, indeed, anything that relates in any way to the image reproduced. No mention of the vision involved in selecting the strong and simple composition, no mention of the apparent perspective distortions (which may, in fact, be truer to reality than unaided human vision), no mention of the sepia color and what it means, no mention of the range of tones and how it organizes the picture. No mention, in short, of anything concerned with looking at photographs, as there is precious little mention elsewhere in the book of the visual effects photographs can achieve, how their tonalities are different from those of prints or paintings, what devices may alter the final product—lenses, filters, etc.—or how the effects of early photographs depend on the technical capabilities of available film and how photographers took advantage of those capabilities. This lack of visual confrontation is traditionally typical of the established photographic periodical *Aperture*, and even such tonic calls for reform as John Ward's *The Criticism of Photography as Art* (University of Florida, 1970) tend to be more successful in describing what should be done than in doing it.

Within the last several years two books have appeared on the subject of the relations of photography and painting that throw considerable light on the intellectual problems involved in writing about photography. These are Aaron Scharf's *Art and Photography* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969) and Van

[1] Museum of Modern Art. $17.50; $9.50 paperback.

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Deren Coke's *The Painter and the Photograph* (University of New Mexico, 1972; first published 1964). Coke's book, devoid of scholarly apparatus, is most interesting for its illustrations, which consist largely of juxtapositions of paintings based on photographs and the photographs on which they are based. The text runs to overenthusiastic comment on this material neither organized into any strong logical sequence nor presenting any coherent and convincing thesis. Coke criticizes painters both for following photographs too slavishly and for not following them slavishly enough. At one extreme he says that, "A comparison between paintings of eminent Americans and the photographs from which they stem indicates how rarely the artists improved on their models and how often the paintings were superficial imitations of what the camera recorded." What he neglects to note is that the American painters with whom he has been dealing were all provincial and mostly second-rate, their inability to transform their photographic sources being a function of their level of vision. What happened when a first-rate American painter used photographs is dramatically shown by Thomas Eakins' portrait of Frank Cushing, reproduced by Coke on page 44. A more egregious example of roughly the same error is Coke's statement on page 65 that, "Apparently [Picasso] found it difficult, when the source of his imagery was without three-dimensional characteristics, to disengage from the flatness of the photograph and reconstitute through line alone a sense of life and substance." This à propos the 1917 Picasso portrait of Renoir, reproduced next to its photographic source. What Coke seems not to have realized is that the flatness of the drawing is not due to that of the photograph (which is, in fact, characterized by a strong sense of three-dimensional form, if not by great depth) but to Picasso's style and artistic wishes. The drawing, executed in Picasso's neo-classical style, in fact projects through its line a very powerful sense of life and substance. At the other extreme, Coke quotes Raymond Durgnat on Rico Lebrun's failure to convey the horror of a photograph of Buchenwald by estheticizing his painting of it. What Durgnat and Coke fail to understand is that the horror of the photograph would be entirely lost were it transferred literally to canvas. A painter makes paintings, not photographs or piles of bodies, and the success of his work depends in large part on how intensely he conveys his feelings through and about painting itself, whatever the power of the images and nature of the emotions that spark his creativity. He must, therefore, depart from his photographic sources, as Coke himself had been at pains to point out earlier.

While Scharf's visual material is less strikingly arranged than Coke's, his text is more cautious and coherent, more carefully researched and presented. Like Coke, however, Scharf lacks an overall thesis and one finally suspects that the basic purpose of both books is to legitimize photography by demonstrating how many well known artists have used it as a basis for their compositions. Such approaches are a disservice to both photography and painting, muddying the issue of photography's proper

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qualities and achievements, which should be argued on their own grounds. They do however, as employed by Scharf, throw colder than usual light on the art historical idea of iconographical influence. It is widely supposed that if an image used by one artist can be shown to have been derived from another, something is thereby demonstrated. This classic idea of influence is deeply fallacious, conflating two entities to which Meier-Graefe referred as the artist's human personality and his artistic personality. The two are, of course, bound in one human being and within that human being are inseparable, but once they are projected in a work of art with a life of its own, the artistic personality takes over, the human personality becoming at once the instrument of and an impediment to the realization of the work. While the human personality may be attracted to images in the outside world for its own reasons, those images must be transmuted by the artistic personality to become useful creative material. Thus, what matters esthetically about an artist's images is not where he gets them but what he does with them, how he transforms them in his work. Although there are moments in history when an artist may be able to project a powerful human image—a Crucifixion, say—in a convincing artistic way, the recent past has been a contrary moment when painting's human imagery has been submerged in favor of purely artistic considerations. Thus the fact that Delacroix or Manet or Picasso used photographs is no more interesting than that they used drawings or anything else, and says nothing about photography other than that it was part of the visual environment and nothing at all about the work of the men involved. What might be of interest would be to demonstrate not that an artist used images from photographs in his work but that photographs were a determinant of his style—a factor in his artistic personality—but neither Coke nor Scharf attempts this. Such a demonstration could undoubtedly be made for Corot, whose style seems to have evolved under the influence of photography, but Scharf only alludes to the fact without demonstrating it. It has convincingly been made for Bierstadt in a well reasoned and researched article by Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock in the Winter 1970 *Art Quarterly*. Beyond that, almost nothing has been done to explore the stylistic connections between photography and painting, and what is commonly called photographic painting in the nineteenth century results not from photography but from pre-photographic neo-classical academic training. What a proper investigation of the subject would almost certainly discover is that whereas almost no painters in the nineteenth century saw like photographers, many photographers saw like painters. In any case, what needs to be done is to look at photographs for what they are, developing a meaningful vocabulary for discussing them and exploring their development between 1839 and the present day in some logical and clearly-defined way. It will then be self-evident whether or not photography is an art, and such problems as have plagued the medium for nearly the last century and a half will no longer be an issue.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

One Thousand Roses

JUST BEFORE THE NATIONAL BALLET of Canada's final performance in New York last August, a friend who monitors the intricate behavior of the balletomane sub-culture told me that Rudolf Nureyev was going to receive a thousand roses from his fans. Once I knew it was going to happen, of course, I had to stay around to see how it would be engineered. The well-organized demonstrators had spotted themselves all over the front of the Metropolitan Opera House audience, and they heaved their identical scarlet bouquets across the orchestra pit with judicious timing, so that the deluge would be impressive but not too brief. At first Nureyev started gathering the flowers, as if he didn't know the task would eventually require a small truck, but a few minutes into the presentation I noticed a photographer walk onto the stage from the wings and start taking pictures of the crowd.

Summer—usually the time of year when dancers and dance audiences head for the hills—has developed in recent years into a heavily starred, status-laden extra season. Two theaters at Lincoln Center this year were running dance almost continuously through June, July and most of August. The Met barely squeezed in a few weeks of opera between the Royal Ballet with Nureyev, the Moiseyev, and the Canadians with Nureyev. The New York City Ballet was succeeded at the State Theater by six weeks of American Ballet Theater and two more weeks of Alvin Ailey for good measure—it was Ailey's third New York engagement of the 73-74 season.

Whoever was filling up all those seats for all those weeks must have been a lot of people we don't especially identify as the dance audience. While opera is scratching around for new audiences, dance is beginning to emerge as big box-office entertainment. There are probably all kinds of reasons for this. Obviously, dance as a theatrical experience is still a novelty to most people, and the ballet repertory is neither as limited nor as familiar as the standard opera rep. But I think some of the reasons are tied to who we are now as a society—to a wish for sexual liberation and a great deal of sexual doubt, and to the increasingly frustrated desire for personal expression. Those precarious four-inch platform shoes that so many New Yorkers were teetering around on last summer are not merely some weird gimmick of the designers. They're a direct throwback to the Greek cothurnus, the shoes worn by actors to make them look more majestic.

The New York dance public wants stars. Eats up stars. Sometimes it invents stars where there are none, sees a star where there isn't one any longer. Something in the basic nature of ballet has always favored the star system—it was first danced by a king after all, Louis XIV—and until the

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twentieth century it was almost exclusively concerned with creating star roles and surrounding them with appropriate spectacle. Even in contemporary times, when choreography began to be considered an art, when the corps had to look as though it belonged to the ballet and the stars had to do steps that were reasonably similar at each performance of it, there have been very few real ensemble ballets.

Eliot Feld, Jerome Robbins and Twyla Tharp are almost the only working choreographers whose ballets aren't constantly calling attention to one or two principal performers—and none of them can be considered a strict classicist. They are capable of making us see the whole stage organism working and changing in its interrelated patterns; they can make a group of dancers balance, or even overbalance, a single soloist; and they can interest us for long periods of time in a stage action from which the principals are absent. Most of the prominent "modern" ballet choreographers, MacMillan, Van Dantzig, Neumeier, Arpino, Butler, and the late John Cranko, have worked with a much more traditional, hierarchical stage focus. Maybe that's one reason for their huge popularity in the opera houses of Europe and North America.

Ovations have grown extravagant and kinky in New York dance. Sometimes you'd swear the hordes are yelling their contempt instead of their approval. They act as if they're being cheated when the Alvin Ailey company doesn't comply with their demand for an encore of "Revelations." The exploding flashbulb has become so common during dance performances now that the tonier houses actually make an announcement explaining how dangerous it is for the dancer to get that blast of light in his eyes. This summer someone reportedly lobbed a plastic bag of eggs at Natalia Makarova during a bow, and I saw several dancers get belted in the stomach with flowers.

It's all reminiscent somehow of the Kennedy era. Except I think what the mob wanted so desperately with the Kennedys was to believe they were common men. Now the crowd wants to believe in itself as star. A few years ago Alvin Ailey made a dance about the mutual turn-on and drag-down that stars and audiences exert over each other. It was suggested by the life of Janis Joplin and it starred ballerina Lynn Seymour, and it was called "Flowers."

This insatiable public loves its stars when they play stars, and scorns them when they expose any weakness. Cynthia Gregory, that most knowing of dancers, exploits her fabulous technique, mocks the audience and at the same time revels in their screams of adoration. Bruce Marks, whose theatrical wisdom and security make him an invaluable partner for Gregory, returned to Ballet Theater this summer looking as if he hadn't been dancing enough these last few years in Denmark, and the audience wouldn't give him the time to get back in shape. Young Fernando Bujones, all brilliant technique and insufferable conceit, is being rushed to fame, as if the audience can't wait for his head to catch up with his body.

Ballet Theater has always capitalized on its stars, and the company has

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a magic propensity for coming up with a new phenomenon just when its own fortunes seem to be plunging most steeply. This summer, with its fiscal policies and personnel under attack by the New York State Council on the Arts, the company was supposedly thinking of curtailing its season, or maybe even throwing in the towel altogether, depending on which rumor-monger you listened to. Suddenly there was Baryshnikov, and the rollercoaster headed upward again.

ABT snapped up the Russian prodigy just after he defected in Canada, early in the summer, and presented him for his U.S. debut partnering its other lapsed-Soviet superstar, Natalia Makarova. Since her arrival here in 1970, Makarova has displayed a very publicizable temperament, cultivated a healthy coterie of fans, and incidentally danced very well indeed on several occasions. But she was becoming stale news, and this summer they touted her in a new role, as director of a revival of the last act of the old Petipa classic, "La Bayadère." She did a fine job with it too, extracting a certain alert stylishness from ABT's somnolent corps de ballet.

Makarova may have a serious bent toward choreographing or directing, but the "Bayadère" caper couldn't help looking like a flareup of her feud with Nureyev. The two matinée idols had some very public spats last winter when they danced together at the Royal. Rudi has also staged nineteenth-century Russian works for Western companies, and Natasha could compete on their old Kirov stamping grounds.

Anyhow, Baryshnikov danced four sensational performances with Makarova—one "Giselle", two "Bayadères" and the "Don Quixote" pas de deux. Given the feverish conditions of this debut, I can be sure only of his virtuosity and how he achieves some of it. His power is in his legs and his unusually flexible back, which give him thrust and speed, accuracy and elevation. He can do more beats, more complicated footwork, faster turns than any male dancer I've ever seen. Some of his most dazzling steps result from his ability to change the position of his legs or upper torso right in the middle of a jump or a turn. He's not a large man, yet onstage he gives you the impression of covering vast distances; he has the athlete's ability to continue sending his force and speed all the way out from the energy source to the very ends of his legs and beyond, into space. The illusion of motion extends the actuality of it.

But Baryshnikov is no mere powerhouse. He places his muscular strength and coordination in the service of artistry. His line is precisely drawn—clear, classical, where he wants it to be. He always looks cool and collected, there's no harshness in the transitions, no abrupt slowdowns or speedups, just perfect control. Arlene Croce described Baryshnikov as some kind of futuristic super-dancer, who has extended the classical vocabulary beyond what ordinary dancers can now do. I think it may be his technical achievement rather than his aesthetic beauty that wowed our audience of technocrats.

No other art offers us man arrayed in such splendid form. The dancer's accomplishment is a perceivable skill, an excellence, like the workings of

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any fine mechanism. Even a mediocre dancer undergoes rigorous training, has a body that must be in top condition, and must master a high degree of discipline, detail and precision. Some of the audience's favorite "stars" are terrible artists—wooden of expression, rigid or sloppy or disproportionate of line—but they have technique, and one thing this computer age worships is technique. I wouldn't be surprised if, once all the critics are quashed, Nixon's abdication enters the mythology as having resulted from a failure of technique.

Ballet training has been infiltrating the modern dance field for years, and you can see almost as many arabesques and pirouettes in some modern dance performances as at the ballet. Perhaps there is a natural progression in art from the individual innovator or revolutionary to the establishment of rules, systems, academies, and in this process what was personal to the artist becomes impersonal tool and methodology. In dance we've seen this happen just in our own time with Martha Graham. We've seen it happen even quicker, and paid less attention to it, when a ballet or a modern dance of particular style gets out from under its creator's thumb. There seems to be an inexorable force—the force of all those years of habit and classes, perhaps, pushing the dancer's body without volition into its accustomed shapes—warning the muscles not to do anything that feels different.

In today's ballet market, only a choreographer of the hard-nosed prestige of a Jerome Robbins can insist on casting and coaching his ballets each season as they are done by various companies. More often, a few months after a piece enters the repertory, it starts to melt around the edges, get a tiny bit distended here, a bit shrunken there. If it's a pleasant ballet, it can still be successful, and nobody notices that it's lost its style.

We had a striking view of this process last June when Eliot Feld's new company produced "Intermezzo" and "At Midnight," two works that had been slogging along for years looking like all the other staples in the Ballet Theater repertory. Feld's early works have always made a hit with audiences; they're beautifully crafted, musical, and even a few notches less inane than the average ballet. Those are the qualities that come through even a rotten production. But now that the ballets have returned to something close to their original state, Feld's distinction as a choreographer is once again apparent. His own dancers are so articulate in space, making clear differences between the space that is close to the body and that which is far away. They show you when a movement is three-dimensional—spiraling, enclosing—and it often is; not linear the way it came to look. They stress the ongoingness of the dance, and also that the action is self-contained. Something is happening, really, among the dancers; not being fabricated for the benefit of us out in the audience.

Feld's work since 1971 has been a disappointment to me, because he seems to be denying most of the things that made him truly creative with the ballet medium. Rather he seems to have been searching for restrictive forms, as if he would like to fashion a new kind of academicism before his

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descendants and imitators do it to him. His two new works, "Sephardic Song" and "Tzaddik," both have a kind of spareness—almost stinginess —of material, a narrowness of focus, a single-minded anxiety that we should get the point. I'm sorry he is limiting his invention so severely now, but I found that some dances I had thought too thin and repetitive looked all right in this new context. I hate to settle for just simplicity when I know the man is capable of depth, but Feld is refreshing after the overelaborate, overdecorated, overdanced 1974 ballets everywhere else.

Topping the season for gross, convoluted production values and a total absence of choreographic individuality was John Neumeier's "Baiser de la Fée," premiered by Ballet Theater in mid-July. Neumeier, an American who's been working in Germany for the past few years, is the new darling of the opera house crowd. We saw his "Don Juan," a Nureyev set piece heavy with psychological portent and light on danced information, during the Canadians' first visit to the Met, in May. "Baiser" is even more ambitious. A young man about to be married to a sweet hometown girl dances with his vision of ideal mature love (I guess). The vision (fairy) is first a singer, then a dancer. The young man has two doubles, an older man and a little boy. There is a troupe of fairies dressed in white ballet tunics, and they alternate numbers with Tyrolean-costumed wedding guests. Scenery rumbles in and out on wagons. The ballet ends and ends and ends while the bride rearranges her dress and the groom pursues his vision into a forest of scrims.

In place of classical virtuosity Neumeier specializes in a vocabulary of acrobatic lifts by Hollywoodized couples yearning at each other. The men hardly dance at all; they're mostly breaking their backs hoisting the women into esoteric poses. The women trip around in orderly squadrons, doing academic maneuvers and oblivious to any content of Stravinsky's music except its beat.

This is the climate of indulgence and hyperactivity that dance is flourishing in today. Small wonder the audience hasn't the patience to learn finesse and style, or to discriminate between high camp and high art. Even in Denmark, where the technique and choreography of the great Romantic ballet master August Bournonville have been preserved as a national treasure, the subtle, delicate Bournonville style is gradually eroding as the gaudier effects of contemporary ballet win audience approval. Only constant vigilance and coaching can keep this nuance of classical dancing from dissolving into the standard ballet rhetoric.

Erik Bruhn, who's now retired from dancing, has been a devoted protector of the Bournonville style. He undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the understated way the Canadians played "La Sylphide" on that last night of the summer. Nureyev, with his ego restrained and his dancing excesses curbed, looked more like the great dancer he used to be than the great star he now plays. Bruhn was making his debut in the mime role of Madge the witch, and you could feel, around the corners of his

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malevolence, that he was keeping a wary eye on his exuberant colleague.

But when it got around to the last ballet of the evening, José Limón's "The Moor's Pavane," Nureyev had it all to himself, or grabbed it. "The Moor's Pavane," based on "Othello," was an almost perfect achievement of modern dance, a beautiful balance of music, movement and acting. Limón, and later his dancers after his death, set the dance on a number of ballet companies, where it receives varying treatment. Usually its theater values are exploited and the powerful, expressive movement is only sketched in.

The Nureyev version reduced Limón's choreography and his movement style to some barely familiar floor patterns. In an altered costume—a getup with a dark red robe slashed above the hip bones to provide the audience with a provocative view of fuschia tights encasing the celebrated legs and crotch—the star pranced and stumbled, emoted and tossed his hair and gnashed his teeth, and failed to do the steps. The three other dancers in this stately dance-drama wandered pale and ineffectual in his wake.

I know the fans had bought all those roses, and had to present them, deserved or not. But the crowd did present them, the ovation was as heartfelt as if they'd seen wonders. They might as well have endowed a barber shop.

Michael Holroyd:
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Reviews

MARVIN MUDRICK

The Man in the Machine

INNOCENCE WAS NO EXCUSE. "For several decades political arrests were distinguished in our country precisely by the fact that people were arrested who were guilty of nothing and were therefore unprepared to put up any resistance whatsoever. There was a general feeling of being destined for destruction, a sense of having nowhere to escape from the GPU-NKVD (which, incidentally, given our internal passport system, was quite accurate). . . ."[1] *The Gulag Archipelago* is the first true history of a country that, fearing to seem unreal, abolished history:

> This submissiveness was also due to ignorance of the mechanics of epidemic arrests. By and large, the *Organs* had no profound reasons for their choice of whom to arrest and whom not to arrest. They merely had over-all assignments, quotas for a specific number of arrests. These quotas might be filled on an orderly basis or wholly arbitrarily. In 1937 a woman came to the reception room of the Novocherkassk NKVD to ask what she should do about the unfed unweaned infant of a neighbor who had been arrested. They said: "Sit down, we'll find out." She sat there for two hours—whereupon they took her and tossed her into a cell. They had a total plan which had to be fulfilled in a hurry, and there was no one available to send out into the city—and here was this woman already in their hands!

Gogolian comic machinery had come to life in Mother Russia a century after Gogol: "Everyone maintained a serious mien, but everyone understood it was a farce, above all the boys of the convoy, who were the simplest sort of fellows. At the Novosibirsk Transit Prison in 1945 they greeted the prisoners with a roll call based on *cases*. 'So and so! Article 58-1a, twenty-five years.' The chief of the convoy guard was curious: 'What did you get it for?' 'For nothing at all.' 'You're lying. *The sentence for nothing at all is ten years.*' " Those who blame Stalin and hope for the best are reminded by Solzhenitsyn that, within months after the October Revolution, the Bolshevik leaders had already laid the juridical foundations of Wonderland:[2] a judiciary subservient to the

[1] THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO (I-II), by *Aleksander I. Solzhenitsyn*. Harper and Row. $12.50.

[2] "In 1919 . . . executions were carried out in Moscow, Petrograd, and other cities *on the basis of lists*—in other words, free people were simply arrested and executed immediately, and

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executive, which could alter or override or impose or indeed originate any judgment; the only police force in history that was "legally" empowered to investigate, arrest, interrogate, prosecute, try, convict, imprison, and put to death; the very model of a modern Prosecutor General poisoning the air at the earliest political trials, N. V. Krylenko, "organizer of the Department of Exceptional Courts of the People's Commissariat of Justice," who declared in open session as early as 1918 that "fine points of jurisprudence are unnecessary" because the concept of guilt is "an old bourgeois concept which has now been uprooted" and only "class expediency" counts (in accordance with the rules of farce, anybody sooner or later becomes *it;* and theoretician Krylenko eventually had the satisfaction of being tried, convicted, and shot as a "ferocious enemy of the people").

Well, then, were the "bluecaps" (the functionaries of Soviet State Security, whatever infamous cluster of initials they happened to be carrying at the moment; but changing their initials didn't help) as bad as the Gestapo? Worse, replies Solzhenitsyn:

> There is no way of sidestepping this comparison: both the years and the methods coincide too closely. And the comparison occurred even more naturally to those who had passed through the hands of both the Gestapo and the MGB. One of these was Yevgeny Ivanovich Divnich, an émigré and preacher of Orthodox Christianity. The Gestapo accused him of Communist activities among Russian workers in Germany, and the MGB charged him with having ties to the international bourgeoisie. Divnich's verdict was unfavorable to the MGB. He was tortured by both, but the Gestapo was nonetheless trying to get at the truth, and when the accusation did not hold up, Divnich was released. The MGB wasn't interested in the truth and had no intention of letting anyone out of its grip once he was arrested.

Comparisons between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia don't sit well with certain intellectuals (not Lenin's "rotten" kind?), among them George Steiner, who has been specializing for years in the moral sensibility of the universe (on one occasion it took him five or six thousand words to pull himself together when some insensitive clod told him that commandants of Nazi death camps had been known to relax after a hot day at the ovens by reading Goethe and playing Schubert). "To infer that the Soviet terror is as hideous as Hitlerism is not only a brutal over-

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right and left those elements of the intelligentsia considered *close to the Cadets* [the bourgeois Constitutional Democratic Party] were raked into prison." When Gorky tried to intercede for some of the jailed intellectuals, Lenin was amused: "What a misfortune, just think about it! What injustice!" and advised him "not to waste your energy whimpering over rotten intellectuals." *Five years* after the Revolution, revising the draft of a new Criminal Code, Lenin stressed the need for an institutionalization of terror, and added six articles specifying execution by shooting (one of them, for "propaganda and agitation") to the six proposed in the draft.

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simplification but a moral indecency [why?]. Set out by themselves, the facts have no real meaning [why not?]"; and as for Divnich's first-hand testimony: "left bare, devoid of a moral and historical context as problematic as any human sensibility has ever had to face [not to mention the unproblematic torments and terrors that Solzhenitsyn and the millions of others had to face for ten and twenty years], these facts tend to a gross inference that the Gestapo was using torture merely to seek 'the truth.' "[3] Gross inferences from gross sensibilities. Steiner is a man of ideas and inferences (an intellectual no doubt); but Solzhenitsyn is interested in facts, what the beast actually did—beating, starving, piling together till the point of mass suffocation, confinement in the freezing cell or hot box, stamping on the genitals—and how often and where and when and to how many. In the footnote on Divnich he offers important evidence about two different attitudes toward "truth," and he is so outraged by the *fact* of the MGB's worse-than-Nazi shamelessness as to ignore this opportunity to draw from the fact an important moral and historical inference: that the Nazis had boundaries (the Gestapo was the plug-ugly at the gate) while the Soviets had only goblins and alarms (the MGB was the maniac in the parlor); that it was possible to be a Nazi in Nazi Germany but impossible to be a Communist in Communist Russia; that a German who professed the right combination of loyalties and beliefs was and remained as acceptable a Nazi as any other, whereas a Russian couldn't profess *or fail to profess* anything whatever that mightn't sooner or later be used against him. The Nazis had a community, with articles of agreement and exclusion. The Soviets had the innumerable estranging "islands" of the Archipelago—death for a word and ten years for nothing at all—to instruct their people that, because the system was by moral and economic definition perfect, its failure to work perfectly was the criminal responsibility of a whole population of slackers, wreckers, traitors, rotten intellectuals. If the Western political dilettante would like to think that Stalin (the maniac in the attic) or certainly Lenin or at least Trotsky was "better" than Hitler—at any rate that the Soviet polity is susceptible of moral amelioration and the Nazi was not—Solzhenitsyn says nothing to contradict him. The author of *The Gulag Archipelago* isn't a Fascist, and he's as immoderate and exacerbated a Russian patriot as Dostoevsky; but he's writing history,[4] not prophecy.

[3] *The New Yorker*, August 5, 1974, pp. 83-4.

[4] *Current* history, according to *American P.E.N. Newsletter* #15 (Summer 1974):

American P.E.N. has protested the alleged torture of USSR writer Valentin Moroz. In a telegram sent to N. V. Podgorny, President of the USSR, the Center wrote: "American P.E.N. deeply concerned by reports that Valentin Moroz subject to extreme and continuous torture in Vladimir Prison, beatings, poisoning, arranged brutality by armed criminal sadists in an effort to force him to recant his opinions. . . ."

American P.E.N. has also communicated its sorrow at the sentence imposed on Gabriel Superfin after his trial in Orel, May 12-14. Superfin, a 30-year-old Moscow literary critic who claimed he was not allowed legal counsel, was given five years confinement in a strict regime labor camp and two years exile for his

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Because he works with facts, Solzhenitsyn isn't sentimental about the Old Bolsheviks as, puzzling over the "riddle" of the show trials, men of ideas and inferences are inclined to be: he isn't, for instance, surprised to find Bukharin—the leading Party theoretician, "the favorite of the Party" (in the words of Lenin's Testament), last of the surviving front-rank Bolsheviks in Russia (Trotsky hadn't yet been assassinated in Mexico) except for Stalin—assuring Stalin in 1937 that everything the Great Leader has seen fit to do (including the millions of murders) has been proper and necessary. Bukharin was pleading for his life, and at the same time persuading himself that he was helping to preserve the *idea* of the Revolution; most of the others would have had similar feelings; and they ended as they did because they were weak, conceited, frightened, used-up men who had had relatively easy lives even during their short stints in Tsarist exile or prisons (which by the evidence Solzhenitsyn presents must have been rather like American minimum-security facilities for embezzlers and careless politicians). For years they must have been hearing the news about large-scale corrective methods introduced and perfected by their old comarade the Great Cannibal, and their hearts failed them:

> . . . where is the riddle? How they were *worked over*? Very simply: Do you want to *live*? (And even those who don't care about themselves care about their children or grandchildren.) Do you understand that it takes absolutely no effort to have you shot, without your ever leaving the courtyards of the GPU? (And there was no doubt whatever about that. Whoever hadn't yet learned it would be given a course in being ground down by the Lubyanka.) But it is useful both for you and for us to have you act out a certain drama . . . you'll see that no one who behaved has been shot. . . . But the understanding is that you have to carry out *all* our conditions to the very last! The trial must work for the good of socialist society.

(Those who wouldn't make a deal committed suicide or were tortured to death or shot.) Still, the details of the long, slow, lazy cat-and-mouse game Stalin played with Bukharin are fascinating, Bukharin abject and hoping against hope ("Dear Koba! Dear Koba!"—"Koba" was Stalin's nickname in the early Party days, when he robbed banks for the Party), Stalin courteous and playful ("Come on, now! No one is going to expel you from the Party!"):

> Bukharin believed him and revived. He willingly assured the Plenum of his repentance, and immediately abandoned his hunger strike. (At home he said: "Come on now, cut me some sausage! Koba said they

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purported anti-Soviet activites. Before his trial Superfin had been held in solitary confinement for eight months.

Superfin was credited by Solzhenitsyn for help in collecting materials for *August 1914*.

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wouldn't expel me.") But in the course of the Plenum, Kaganovich and Molotov (impudent fellows they were, indeed!—paid no attention to Stalin's opinion!) both called Bukharin a Fascist hireling and demanded that he be shot.[5]

But Stalin's feline intricacies weren't yet exhausted. As cream of the jest he would have the mouse—great theoretician!—create a beautiful Constitution; and "Bukharin wrote every last word of our entire existing—in other words, nonexistent—Constitution, which is so beautiful to listen to." Shortly before Bukharin's trial, the document was adopted "with fanfare and celebration and named . . . the Stalinist Constitution for all eternity." The ultimate irony—which Solzhenitsyn, requiring Stalin's villainy to be without a flaw even in the grave, doesn't acknowledge—is that many of the public protests which a handful of Soviet citizens have been making in recent years against their government justify themselves on the authority of this Constitution (because Orwell was wrong and Newspeak never really happens: love means love, peace means peace, and Stalin in the grave is undercut by Bukharin's words as Hitler could never be by Goebbels's or his own; socialism, like the Church, is stuck with a lovely vocabulary; a document which is beautiful to listen to has beautiful meanings which are always understood and will sooner or later be acted on by *some*body).

How shudderingly Solzhenitsyn loathes the dead image of Stalin! the supreme villain! and yet needs to insist on seeing in him only vanity, stupidity, mediocrity. The schizophrenia explodes with a dull thud in the chapter in which Solzhenitsyn, denouncing capital punishment, cries out abruptly: "Even if Stalin had killed no others, I believe he deserved to be drawn and quartered just for the lives of those six Tsarskoye Selo peasants!" Solzhenitsyn asks, "Where is the riddle?" But his inescapable riddle is Stalin, who for nearly three decades kept an immense country in paralysis and waking nightmare by the force of example, precedent, Marxist or pseudo-Marxist doctrine, party discipline, police terror, patriotic war—but mostly, it seems, by the force of that vain, stupid, mediocre personality. All the irony, sarcasm, anger, indignation, rage, fury that drive Solzhenitsyn through this chronicle of wasted time beat themselves raw against the sense of waste, loss, imbecile repetition, monotony, immobility. The same gray tableau: Stalin in the doorway

[5] Solzhenitsyn adds a footnote: "See what a wealth of information we are deprived of because we're protecting Molotov's noble old age." (Earlier: "symbol of them all, the smug and stupid Molotov lives on at Granovsky No. 3, a man who has learned nothing at all, even now, though he is saturated with our blood and nobly crosses the sidewalk to seat himself in his long, wide automobile.") Solzhenitsyn has some grim fun with footnotes, especially when he wishes to remind his compatriots that the assassins are still larking along without a worry in the world if they haven't died in tranquil old age: "Today Lozovsky [provocateur and stool pigeon] holds the degree of candidate in medical sciences and lives in Moscow. Everything is going well with him"; Viktor Andreyevich Seryegin [formerly a political commissar in the army and of course an energetic accomplice in frameups] lives in Moscow today and works in a Consumer Service Combine attached to the Moscow Soviet. He lives well."

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watching impassively, the victim spreadeagled on his back held by four guards while the prison boss prepares to take what he calls his "penalty kick," the masses turned away from the scene with their noses buried in *Pravda* ("Truth") or *Izvestiya* ("News"), none of them capable of deviating an inch from his appointed posture. So when Solzhenitsyn comes across a live one, the book and the reader get a lift that momentarily fetches them straight up out of the chamber of horrors and into the regions of light.

In 1937 the Stalin apparatus was organizing show trials out in the provinces for the purpose of exposing to the masses "the black soul of the opposition." As one of the defendants it picked Vasily Grigoryevich Vlasov, head of the District Consumer Cooperative of the village of Kady in remote Ivanovo Province. He had already angered the District Prosecutor by refusing him special favors and the NKVD by protecting two of his subordinates against charges of "wrecking." When an honest official was slandered, Vlasov called for the slanderer's expulsion from the Party; but the slandered man was arrested and, after he had been tortured to death, a full confession was published over his name. The slanderer became district head of the Party. The Deputy Chairman of the district NKVD came to Vlasov with "a peace proposal"—in return for a small bribe, Vlasov's safety would be guaranteed—and Vlasov threw him out. Thereupon Vlasov was requested to bring charges at a Party meeting against two of the local administrators, so that the NKVD could trap him by asking why he hadn't informed on them earlier! Vlasov refused: "I won't make the report! Let Krylov make the report—after all, he arrested Smirnov and Univer and is handling their case." Krylov: "I'm not familiar with the evidence." Vlasov: "If even *you* aren't familiar with the evidence, that means they were arrested without cause." And Solzhenitsyn comments: "So the Party meeting simply didn't take place. But how often did people dare to defend themselves?" Vlasov's friends collected money for him and begged him to run away; but he refused. The district newspaper began attacking the Consumer Cooperative. Meanwhile Vlasov had managed to work out an ingeniously practical way of (1) complying with government directives intended to deprive the people of bread, and (2) having large quantities of bread baked locally and distributed to the local inhabitants, who (3) hitherto had had to travel long distances and wait in long lines for the centralized and inadequate government distribution. At last he was arrested and "charged with: (1) initiating bread lines; (2) having an inadequate minimum assortment of merchandise . . .; (3) procuring a surplus of salt." Klyugin, NKVD trial manager, came to Vlasov's cell: " 'You've got to admit your guilt and tell the whole truth!' 'The truth and nothing but the truth,' agreed Vlasov, '. . . that you are every bit as bad as the German Fascists!' " Klyugin: "Listen here, you whore, you'll pay with your blood!"[6] When Saburov, another defendant, "begged that his life be spared—'not for me, but for my little

[6] Solzhenitsyn's footnote: "Your own blood, too, is going to flow soon, Klyugin! Caught in the Yezhov gang of gaybisty [secret police], Klyugin will have his throat cut by the stool pigeon Gubaidulin."

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children'—Vlasov, out of vexation, pulled him back by the jacket: 'You're a fool.' " In his last statement to the court Vlasov said: "I consider you not a court but actors pretending to be a court in a stage farce where roles have already been written for you. You are engaged in a repulsive provocation on the part of the NKVD. You are going to sentence me to be shot no matter what I say. I believe one thing only: the time will come when you will be here in my place." (Solzhenitsyn's regretful footnote reveals that this final prediction was inaccurate.) Later the verdict was read:

> After the solemn words "To be shot!" the judges paused for applause. But the mood in the hall was so gloomy . . . that no applause was to be heard even from the first two benches, where the Party members were sitting. This, indeed, was totally improper. "Oh, good Lord, what have you done?" someone in the hall shouted at the members of the court. Univer's wife dissolved in tears. In the half-darkness, the crowd began to stir. Vlasov shouted at the front benches:
>
> "Come on, you bastards, why aren't you clapping? Some Communists you are!"
>
> The political commissar of the guards platoon ran up to him and shoved his revolver in his face. Vlasov reached out to grab the revolver, but a policeman ran up and pushed back his political commissar, who had been guilty of a blunder. The chief of the convoy gave the command: "Arms at the ready!" And thirty police carbines and the pistols of the local NKVD men were aimed at the defendants and at the crowd. . . .

Soon after, the apparatus decided that political trials would be private in the future (Vlasov's trial, altogether too public, had been reported in the provincial newspapers). What was the world coming to, when a defendant was so unsophisticated he couldn't be managed? Bukharin and the other old pros knew their place, but Stalin was fresh out of old pros.

A man like Vlasov is too daring for fiction, and that may be one of the reasons (besides the fear of identifying people for reprisal) why, so much tamer than history, Solzhenitsyn's fiction seems by comparison with this eruption of historical testimony cautious, sluggish, "objective," "universal"—Nobel-Prize fiction, testifying to the persistence of hope, the possibility of love and justice, the validity of suffering as chapter by chapter we all lurch heavily through the parched desert of fictional psychologizing ("Lavrenty Pavlovich was one of those young men who . . ."). *Ivan Denisovich* is an earnest quasi-documentary; the portrait of Stalin in *The First Circle* is effective in a restrained and long-winded mode (*Gulag* and history can do it with a stroke: "The OSO . . . was subordinate only to the Minister of Internal Affairs, to Stalin, and to Satan"), but nothing cheerful in the novel goes much beyond the female tractor-driver school of socialist realism; *The Cancer Ward* is medical soap-opera. *August 1914,* on

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the other hand, is an expert piece of *technical* writing, interesting (if also fatiguing) for Solzhenitsyn's relentless spelling out of military detail, as well as for the relentless, occasionally apoplectic partisanship with which he attributes the Russian army's defeats to "wooden-headed" and cowardly generals (a mere inversion of Tolstoy's populist theorizing about war, which Solzhenitsyn mocks at and dismisses in the book). *August 1914* is the first installment of a series intended to be almost or mainly history; but, like the earlier novels, it is preliminary to Solzhenitsyn's important work—which he begins with *The Gulag Archipelago* (police seizure of the ms. having settled the question of secrecy)—as the first inside historian of the débâcle of twentieth-century Russia:

> And how we burned in the camps later, thinking: What would things have been like if every Security operative, when he went out at night to make an arrest, had been uncertain whether he would return alive and had to say good-bye to his family? Or if, during periods of mass arrests, as for example in Leningrad, when they arrested a quarter of the entire city, people had not simply sat there in their lairs, paling with terror at every bang of the downstairs door and at every step on the staircase, but had understood they had nothing left to lose and had boldly set up in the downstairs hall an ambush of half a dozen people with axes, hammers, pokers, or whatever else was at hand? After all, you knew ahead of time that those bluecaps were out at night for no good purpose. And you could be sure ahead of time that you'd be cracking the skull of a cutthroat. Or what about the Black Maria sitting out there on the street with one lonely chauffeur—what if it had been driven off or its tires spiked? The Organs would very shortly have suffered a shortage of officers and transport and, notwithstanding all of Stalin's thirst, the cursed machine would have ground to a halt!

But nobody (except Vlasov) made a move, and the farce went on:

> The machine stamped out the sentences. The prisoner had already been deprived of all rights when they cut off his buttons on the threshold of State Security, and he couldn't avoid a stretch. The members of the legal profession were so used to this that they fell on their faces in 1958 and caused a big scandal. The text of the projected new "Fundamental Principles of Criminal Prosecution of the U.S.S.R." was published in the newspapers, and they'd *forgotten* to include any reference to *possible* grounds for acquittal. The government newspaper issued a mild rebuke: "*The impression might be created* that our courts only bring in convictions."

The typewriters continued to type out dossiers, neither the physical presence nor even a photo of the prisoner was necessary, the speed of the verdicts "was limited only by the technology of typewriting"; and how could The Great Typewriter have guessed that there was more to a prisoner named Solzhenitsyn than his dossier?

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VERNON YOUNG

Poetry Chronicle: Sappho to Smith[1]

BY WAY OF BRIEF INTRODUCTION to the chronicle that follows, I want to use; *as a point of departure only,* the contemporary American sector of Richard Ellmann's giant anthology, published a year ago and by now established, I feel sure, in the colleges, as the most comprehensive selection of English-language poetry available in a single volume. (155 poets, 1200-odd poems, from Whitman and Hopkins to our own time.) Nothing is easier than to criticize an anthologist for what he leaves out. It is nonetheless important to do so if, by his action, he misrepresents the nature of the sequel he is depicting. I believe Ellmann does misrepresent the authentic directions of *American* poetry today and tomorrow, within the last 300 pages, more of less, of his entries.

To move directly to my point, Ellmann's selections at the end of the book reflect his attempt to be consistent with the antinomy he sets up in the preamble to his survey: the "two contrary extremes" which appear to him to characterize contemporary American poetry. (In Section 6 of his "Conclusions" he is patently preoccupied with *Americans* only.) "On the one hand are the 'formalists' for whom literature is a definite institution and whose poems are highly . . . perfected items in an established tradition." On the other, it follows, are the "*in*formalists" who reject tradition, compositional structure and so-called closed forms, preferring "open-field composition" and, it is inferred, the attitudes that accompany verbal insurrection. Ellmann's tendency (it is not quite eagerness) recapitulates not only the timeless quarrels of Classicists and Romantics but also the urgently American impulse—originating in the secession from Europe, and dogmatically framed by the political two-party system—toward unshaded separatism (as compensation for the

[1] THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN POETRY, edited by *Richard Ellmann* and *Robert O'Clair*. W. W. Norton. $14.95. THE AVENUE BEARING THE INITIAL OF CHRIST INTO THE NEW WORLD, by *Galway Kinnell*. Houghton-Mifflin. $5.95. SAPPHO TO VALERY: Poems in Translation, by *John Frederick Nims*. Rutgers. $15.00. SIMPLICITIES, by *Oscar Mandel*. Spectrum Productions Book, Los Angeles. $4.00. WORDS OF PARADISE: Poetry of Papua, New Guinea, ed. *Ulli Beier*. Unicorn Press. $1.95. ELEVEN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INDIAN POETS, ed. *Dick Lourie*. The Crossing Press. $3.95. ASCENDING RED CEDAR MOON, by *Duane Niatum*. Harper & Row. $5.95. SELECTED POEMS, by *Czeslaw Milosz*. Translated by Several Hands. A Continuum Book, Seabury Press. $5.95. THE DARK SIDE OF THE EARTH, by *Paul Zweig*. Harper & Row. $2.95. IN SEPIA, by *Jon Anderson*. University of Pittsburgh. $5.95, $2.50. 1933, by *Philip Levine*. Atheneum. $3.95. TREE-LINES, by *Robin Fulton*. New Rivers Press. $2.50. THE FISHERMAN'S WHORE, by *Dave Smith*. Ohio University Press. $5.00.

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democratic commitment?): highbrow and lowbrow, reactionary and progressive, intellectual and man-on-the-street, Redskin and Paleface (Philip Rahv's long-ago usage), etcetera. However, if this is the *popular* drive, unconsciously shared by the academy, it is *not* the drive, as I see it, of the best American *poets* in recent years; they are far more sophisticated than many of their predecessors and are too deeply concerned with rediscovering and analyzing (in poetic terms) the complexity of their heritage to settle for such bald antitheses. Ellmann fails seriously, to my mind, either directly or by way of his included poets, to question the supposition that an intransigent outlook is necessarily or best exposed in ostentatiously non-conformist verse. "Revolution" in *today's* poetry is unreal: it is only a fad of the New York School or of sundry Grievance poets elsewhere, following Olson or Ginsberg or, as they think, Robert Lowell. (Lowell is no longer available to ratify their disorder. He has already rewritten most of his *Notebooks* poems, declaring, "I hope this jumble or jungle is cleared—that I have cut the waste marble from the figure.") Since *the* revolution in modern poetry, initiated by Pound and Eliot fifty-five years ago, there has been no traditional form against which to revolt! Poets have been free to employ any *means* they chose and any subject matter they were burning to express. The American poets offered by Ellmann as significant in the poetry of the last fifteen years will be for the most part as dated as Carl Sandburg five years from now. Meanwhile, perhaps to engage the approval of his mayfly confessional poets and leaflet freaks, Ellmann snubs many of the most fruitful American poets being published. In short, while I concede that Ellmann's anthology is otherwise and without a doubt compendious and that his knowledge of modern poets is more copious than that of any critic I know, I do feel that it's a disingenuous insult to represent what has been going on in American poetry (since 1959, let's say), without printing a syllable from the work of, for instances, Donald Justice or Peter Davison or Theodore Holmes or William Stafford or William Dickey or David Wagoner or John Haag or John Peck or Harold Witt or Stephen Sandy or Turner Cassity or Laurence Lieberman or Richmond Lattimore or R. G. Vliet or Wendell Berry or Frederick Nicklaus or Robert Hass or Julia Randall or Eleanor Ross Taylor or Joyce Carol Oates or Marge Piercy or Judith Hemschemeyer.

There are others:

> A boy swings his legs from the pier,
> His days go by, tugs and carfloats go by,
> Each prow pushing a whitecap. On his deathbed
> Kane remembered the abrupt, missed Grail
> Called Rosebud, Gatsby must have thought back
> On his days digging clams in Little Girl Bay
> In Minnesota, Nick fished in dreamy Michigan,
> Gant had his memories, Griffiths, those
> Who went baying after the immaterial
> And whiffed its strange dazzle in a blonde

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In a canary convertible, who died
Thinking of the Huck Finns of themselves
On the old afternoons, themselves like this boy
Swinging his legs, who sees the *Ile de France*
Come in, and wonders if in some stateroom
There is not a sick-hearted heiress sitting
Drink in hand, saying to herself his name.
("The River that is East")

How in the name of the American grain did such a poem get left out of an anthology prevailingly American? Galway Kinnell is a poet of astonishing incarnations, he never seems to be where you last met him and he's always secure in his new adaptation. The present volume brings together poems from his first three books, covering the years between 1946 and 1964, many of the earliest have been returned to their pre-revised form which, upon rediscovery, the author himself preferred. Later poems include revisions which occurred to the poet as he was reading his verse before an audience. By turn and with level facility, Kinnell is a poet of the landscape, a poet of soliloquy, a poet of the city's underside and a poet who speaks for thieves, pushcart vendors and lumberjacks with an unforced simulation of their vernacular. New England woods, the Oregon coast, Calcutta, T'ang Dynasty China, Wales and Manhattan's ghetto: his geography is global and it reveals, when paid close attention, a perennial dialogue of death and resurrection:

Above the quiet valley and unrippled lake
While woodchucks burrowed new holes, and birds sang,
And radicles began downward and shoots
Committed themselves to the spring
And entered with tiny industrious earthquakes,
A dry-rooted, winter-twisted oak
Revealed itself slowly. And one morning
While the valley underneath was still sleeping
It shook itself and it was all green. ("Spring Oak")

In contrast with this shapely burgeoning ode we read, a few pages thereafter, with no clue to the respective composition dates, "Primer for the Last Judgment" (I quote the second of two stanzas):

And now with us: only a few
Years back, at war's close, the sun
Touching the Pacific found
Two cities crumbled. And men
World over asked, "Has the end begun?"
Maybe it has; maybe it shall come
Exploding flesh off the innocent bones,
Mechanized, official, and at once.
Or maybe it has crueller ways—

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Dread of the body, the passion to subdue—
Not to be announced until it is done,
Which is each day from this day
Until the last tomb clutches the last bone.

Hard to believe, as we turn the pages in admiration, that the same poet wrote "The Wolves" or "Where the Track Vanishes" or "Koisimi Buddhist of Altitudes" or, above all, "The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World" (I do think that title is a wounded snake), a masterwork of vocal effects, shared lamentation, unreserved closeups of ghetto characters who, after closing their junkshops and loading their pushcarts, withdraw into "chambers overhead" . . .

where, hands lifted to the blinds,
They glimpse in mirrors backed with the blackness of the world
Awkward, cherished rooms containing the familiar selves . . .

and fluent panoramas that remind one of the swarming, funereal paragraphs of I. B. Singer. Twilight in the fish market is one such *tour de force,* where Kinnell envisions a psalmodic crescendo of "the fishes gone into flesh: the marble cod, the butterfish, perches in grass-green armor, mud-eating mullets," "two-tone flounders. . . . Lying brown side down, like a mass laying-on of hands,/ or the oath-taking of an army":

The only things alive are the carp
That drift in the black tank in the rear
Kept living for the usual reason, that they have not died
. . . .
They nudge each other to be lifted thrashing into the air,
To be slugged, and then to keep on living
While they are opened on the counter.

Fishes do not die exactly, it is more
That they go out of themselves, the visible part
Remains the same, there is little pallor,
Only the cataracted eyes which have not shut ever
Must look through the mist which crazed Homer.

Is Kinnell a *formalist* or an *in*formalist?

The ability to speak in a number of voices may not be a criterion that would stand the test of debate but I'll personally confess that my admiration is governed, to a growing extent, by a poet's powers of ventriloquism. Ideally, translators need this talent more than amply. John Frederick Nims has it to the pitch of audacity. It serves him better, I dare to say, in the poems of others than in his own, where often his choreographic celerity and his exhaustive linguistic miming approach ostentation and diffuse the emotional integrity of the verse. The present anthology of

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translations, however, is one of those books I would not willingly live without, once having made its acquaintance. Published in 1971, it slipped through the *HR* reviewers' net and I was asked to essay it. I'm perhaps the least qualified person to give evaluations of poems translated from, among other languages, the Greek, the Catalan and the Provençal; the best I can do is to convey my pure delight with Nims's craftsmanship; his wit, his common sense and his resolve to convey a poem's form as accurately as possible or, where accuracy is plainly impossible to render, to invent, with spectacular result, an incredible paraphrase which you feel must be more inspired than the original. To the inflexibly conservative, *inspired* might not seem the appropriate word for Nims's transformation of Goethe's Fragonard atmosphere in *Das Tagebuch* with current Americanisms. I fear that if you *can't* update poems so radically many more of them will rest unenlivened or unreclaimed.

Among the poets one re-discovers or discovers for the first time, in Nims's selections, two I found most provocative were Bernart de Ventadorn, a Provençal poet of the twelfth century who has been lost to the world because of the infrequency with which Provençal is read, let alone translated, and Ausias March (pronounced *mark*), a Catalonian (1397?-1459) "whose interests were hawking, women, philosophy, and poetry—though not necessarily in that order nor in any order. . . ." Nims always has something educative and sensible to say when introducing or post-facing his versions: of San Juan de La Cruz; Rosalia de Castro (nineteenth-century, Galician, previously untranslated); Paul Valéry (whose first principle for translation, "Fidelity to meaning alone is a kind of betrayal," Nims has adopted); many others, and all too few poems of Sappho, Catullus and Horace. A healthy instance of Nims's corrective value as a scholar and a critic of scholars is the judgment he makes on the subject of Sappho's fragments:

> Some translators treat the scraps as if they were little haiku-like poems on their own. But Sappho did not write haiku. . . . Her work was formally structured, tightly organized. . . . It is wrong to make her seem wispy, wrong to make poems out of a series of half-lines—as if our imaginary translator of the future, with only a torn piece of the sixth stanza of "Ode to a Nightingale" would have Keats write:
>
> Many a time,
> Easeful death!
> Mused rhyme,
> Quiet breath!
> Rich to die
> With no pain!
> Soul abroad,
> Ears in vain.

Economy, no doubt, has its rights when it is not a synonym for poverty.

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The *Simplicities* of Oscar Mandel should not too readily be called "light verse," meaning quickly scanned and quicker dismissed by warriors and seed-gatherers alike. Mandel hates both parties:

> Do not place your trust in babies:
> Himmler was one.
> Remember he too took his first steps
> on funny pudgy legs,
> You should have seen him gurgle
> and smile at the smiles he saw.
> Ah what a happy family.
>
> Next time you bend over a cradle
> tuck a hatchet in your thoughts.

Mandel once suggested, in an essay on the nature of the comic, that amusement begins as a metamorphosis of fear. Fear, relieved, emerges as comedy. Empirically, I find the definition inadequate yet it may explain the source of *Mandel*'s comic perception. With negative undertones of Jewish self-appraisal, he employs a style closer to the classical asperities of a Callimachus or Martial, thus in his own elfin manner reconciling the Hebraist-Hellenist opposition assumed by Matthew Arnold. No "funnier" than Samuel Hoffenstein, perhaps, he is immensely more patrician. As a shaper of arrowheads from fine-bone porcelain, his closest contemporary rival in English has been J. V. Cunningham. Like Cunningham, Mandel writes from an acquired classical heritage and acrimoniously shuns the consolations of demo-romantic cant:

> Never envy the young
> They are rivers
> that cannot flow without flooding
> they are magnates
> who give to wrong charities,
> and they fall with lamentable wounds
> over a straw in an alley.
>
> We are different.
> We are as different as the hunter
> with a last bullet,
> and the ice of his great hunger.
>
> ("Old Man in Love")

Nearly all these 51 poems (picked from hundreds published) gloss W. H. Auden's aphorism, "Our grief is not Greek." Mandel's "Epilogue" in fact declaims: ". . . Mine the grief/ which follows the worm to the punctual bird;/ mine the minute dominion of the self:/ dominion neither Ghibelline nor Guelf." Erudite, fastidious and unmerciful, Mandel the poet is more

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than a mini-jester; the path of his fear leads him towards wisdom. May his nights be full of music.

Mandel's "Simplicities" compress civilized language into facetious essence. The poems of Papua are compressed outcries of language not yet fertilized by the complexity of the conscious process. Chant, incantation, the ritual cells of verse: these *Words of Paradise,* translations of traditional New Guinea poems, together with recent poems written in English, have extraordinary interest to the ethnologist, but a limited appeal, I should think, to anyone else, since we are by now scarcely ignorant of the pristine forms assimilated in all the arts of the twentieth century. If a certain charm adheres to the naive utterance of tribal invocation, we listen today with greater familiarity than we would have done sixty years ago before the nursery rhyme was analysed by anthropology and primitive spells were incorporated, for special effect, by modern poets. "People of Paon sleep happily/ People of Paon sleep happily/ People of Loko sleep happily/ People of Melli are silent now/ People of Melli have died." Boom-boom-boom! Where sophistication begins in a primitive's art is difficult to say with certitude, for we have come full circle and tend to project ingenuities from our own equipment.

The ocean is peaceful
the silence makes me sad.
The ocean is peaceful
the silence makes me sad.
    You are hidden behind the mist
    go seek your own happiness
    My name is dirt to you
    So let me follow the waves.
When I step across the waters
I'll play in the porpoise's mouth.
When I step across the waters
I'll play in the tortoise's teeth.
    I haven't made love charms yet
    in the back yard.
    My name is dirt to you
    So let me seek my own happiness
    my name is dirt to you
    so let me follow the waves.

How far is the effect here enhanced by exposure to "colonial" modernism, how far is it uninfluenced? Jerome Rothenberg might have helped us with such questions in his sketchy, anti-European postface if he had not been so intent on *politically* defending the Third World, promoting Ulli Beier who allegedly inspired this collection, and foolishly advancing New Guinea verse "against the emptiness of a poetry [ours!] become mere literature."

A similar problem (i.e. of attitude towards aboriginal poetry) arises with the Amerindian verse in *Come to Power,* though few of these poems are

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strictly aboriginal. All but one of the poets are non-Reservation individuals, enrolled in universities or working as ecologists or Conservationists or just working. As Indians, detached from their previous tribal coherence, they are devoted to the spirit of place that fostered their indigenous impulses. Naturally, their subject is the American earth and the vanished cosmology of the Indian way. But they are not thereby qualified to write poems more authentic than those of the White American poet who, when he rides the same wilderness trace, *sees more*, since he sees with a double consciousness. As I read through the entries in this collection—rooted, sincere and scenic (if altogether un-sensuous)—I get the impression I've read them all before. There are no surprises, excepting a little quatrain by Winston Mason, positively Mandelian:

> "Just a minute"
> You said.
> Then took the rest
> of my life.

The best—those that fulfill one's demand for verses that not only characterize but have a certain architectural weight, reinforced with metaphor—are two poems, "Chief Leschi" and "Old Tillicum," by Duane Niatum, a Klallam Indian who, beside, has a volume of his own (*Ascending Red Cedar Moon*) and is sufficiently "Europeanized" to try therein the surreal and to write an "Homage to Chaga." The Indian poet, *as such*, is committed to a poetry of nostalgia; if he renounces that mode he can no longer claim special identity as an Indian. I am moved to quote the only five words Thomas Wolfe wrote that I want to remember: You Can't Go Home Again.

Czeslaw Milosz knows this very well, yet he hopes to make a pact and find home elsewhere. A Lithuanian in exile, trenchant author of *The Captive Mind* and gifted translator of *Post-War Polish Poetry*, he provides me, unexpectedly from his own *Selected Poems*, with an episode that illuminates the foregoing subject with ambient affection and irony. (Constantin Cavafy combined with Polish fervor, so to speak.)

> Grateful for a rising and a setting sun
> wherever you are, you could never be an alien.
>
> Was Father Junipero an alien, when on mule-back
> he came here, wandering through the deserts of the south.
> He found redskin brothers. Their reason and memory
> were dimmed. They had been roaming very far
> from the Euphrates, the Pamirs, and the heights of Cathay,
> slowly, as far as any generation can
> pursuing its goal: good hunting grounds.
> And there, where later the land sank into the cold
> shallow sea, they had lived thousands of years,

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until they had almost completely forgotten the Garden of Eden
and had not yet learned the reckoning of time.
Father Junipero, born on the Mediterranean
brought them news about their first parents,
about the signs, the promise, and the expectation.
He told them, exiles, that there, in their native land,
their guilt had been washed away, just as dust is washed
from their foreheads, sprinkled with water.
It was like something they had heard of long ago.
But, poor people, they had lost the gift of concentration
and a preacher had to hang from his neck a roasted flank of
deer in order to attract their greedy eyes.
But then they slobbered, so loudly, he could not speak.

Nonetheless it was they who in my place took possession
of rocks on which only mute dragons
were basking from the beginning, crawling out of the sea.
They sewed a clock from the plumage of flickers, hummingbirds,
and tanagers,
and a brown arm, throwing back the mantle, would point to: this.
And the land was henceforth conquered: seen.
("Throughout Our Lands")

The ensemble from which I have taken this deftly orchestrated passage is a work of first importance, the kind of synthesis which can be achieved only by a poet whose penetrant historical consciousness has been chastened and enriched by uprooting and agonized resettlement. Ghost of the European vortex, amazed at survival, Milosz creates simulacra of himself and speaks to them, and speaking *through* them establishes an ostensible dialogue with mankind. (Which may be a partial definition of the poet's burden.) To oppose the tyranny of subjectivism, to control the temper of his verse and to regulate the ambivalence of his mind, Milosz has fashioned, throughout the years, a sequence of impersonations, a dialectic forever unresolved but in every instance poetically definitive: rejecting Europe; remembering, with love, Lithuania; accepting America, disquieted by its impersonalities.

Ill at ease in the tyranny, ill at ease in the republic . . .

I learned at last to say: this is my home,
here, before the glowing coal of ocean sunsets,
on the shore which faces the shores of your Asia,
in a great republic, moderately corrupt. ("To Raja Rao")

Thin-lipped, blue-eyed, without grace or hope,
before God the Terrible, body of the world.
Prayers are not heard. Basalt and granite.
Above them, a bird of prey. The only beauty.
("To Robinson Jeffers")

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He has grounds more relative than those of Robert Hass for repudiating Jeffers; every hour of his experience and every line of his poetry testify to the need. Essentially, in the Jeffers poem, a Slav Catholic is challenging a Protestant Celt; a forest is confronting the ocean.

The photograph of Paul Zweig in full closeup on the cover of his book is accurately designed to illustrate the content of his poems: the determination to walk, eyes a-glitter and haunted, into a heart of darkness. Faced with many young American poets who write (well or badly) of "The Dark Side of the Earth," a Czeslaw Milosz might well exclaim, in the testy voice of Othello, "I have made my way through more impediments/Than twenty times your stop." Zweig, inching his way towards a viable subject, like a caterpillar after a green leaf, improves with every publication, yet one does feel compelled to question the reality of his compulsive negations, since they don't wholly convince: his "obedience to the memory of pain . . . trying to reach you from the face where I am shipwrecked . . . I would like to write for nobody/ To hide my words under a stone." "From you" (here he addresses a beetle) "I inherit my patience/ With pure horror; My faceted eyes, all but one of their gleams/ Turned inward;/ My self-knowledge; my dread of footsteps." Ugolino gnawing his hand? Actually, there seems to be little "self-knowledge" in these poems at half-mast; nowhere in them do we find a comprehensive basis, a lived justification, for the poet's *weltschmerz*. I don't mean that a poet should submit his credentials for suffering in a slip-case with his poems, but if the poems don't entirely ring true, my complaint has bearing. Zweig has a knack, bred from a necessity for distinguishing himself from the insensitive others, of evoking characters without specifying them; they are not in fact characters, they are the character of his perspective:

> I remember the smile of a woman
> Who hadn't spoken for three days,
> Her lips smelling of cold ash,
> Her stomach flat as a wish;
> A woman with no hungers.
>
> Her hands were tunnels,
> She had faces I had never seen.
>
> Her face of cold grass,
> Breasts whispering to themselves,
> Her face without music
> Bent inward like a prayer;
> Her face of rain misting slowly, bitterly.
>
> When she talked,
> Loaves of quiet heaped
> In the green light of the café.
>
> ("Robinson Crusoe's Notebooks")

This is graphic, almost lovely, and it's probably the vein he will continue

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to cultivate. His title poem, "The Dark Side of the Earth," suggests a humane, outraged identification with the bombed and forgotten, yet it fails to account for the fact that everything Zweig touches becomes warped or turns gray: perhaps a translator of Lautréamont is already a hostage to the discontinuous image and to abdication from a rational identity. The archetype of the Zweig poem is the first, and one of the best, in this book, "Getting Older":

> Sometimes, when I go for a walk,
> I see an old man's face smiling without humor
> His fleshy lips resemble an ear
> Moving cautiously without any sound.
> He waits for me at the end of a milky street
> Which turns unpredictably into swamp or rust.
> It is the old man I may never reach,
> Distracted by everything that must be lived,
> My hands twitching like butterflies in the brief sunlight.

Oscar Mandel, intending a type-satire ("The Advantage of Trivia") all the same offered good general advice: "Keep busy is the rule of men/too shrewd to be too wise./ There is no horror in the air/ but where we realize." Jon Anderson is another child of the mirage, without Zweig's will to hallucination. He explains—"My poetry isn't for everyone. It's for people like myself who want to contend with themselves. I think of my poems as intimate conversations with close friends, to whom I'm not afraid to reveal my vulnerability and loneliness. It might sound exclusive, but that's the way it is. There are other writers to take care of other audiences." This is an honest, if expendable, apologia—*nobody's* poetry is for everyone!—which invites proportional candor from the critic. I think Anderson is a fine poet but I wouldn't say he engrossed my attention! A somnambulist who employs with grave and understated skill the language of the wakeful, he appears to have stepped into life as into a dream (there's a long ancestry of belief that we all do; it's also a comforting metaphor with which we console ourselves for our limits). "Under the great world's trees I'm walking,/ I entered a cloud. It was my name/ I entered a world in which people are walking,/ The leaves are falling and the wind blows cold." "A world in which people are walking" is as far as Anderson gets in his effort to apprehend people. Apprehension is far from his wish, indeed; he cherishes night walks and waking alone and living alone in company (an un-naturalized citizen of Sweden); to *observe* is no part of his obligation or if it is he excludes it from his poems with reticence so complete it would appear obtuse if he were not so articulate in his recognition of the incapacity. His quiet self-regard proposes a reversal of Henry James's credo: trying to be one of those on whom *everything* is lost except the sober luxury of his own labyrinth. In the closing lines of "Refusals," of which the nominal subject is the habitually ineffectual violence of marriage (couched in a subtly nautical over-image), the quintessence of his manner is beautifully registered:

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These refusals begin to look like courage.
You-re trying hard not to give in.

But you can't come down from yourself;
You wouldn't if you could.
So you end up speechless, writing it down:
That tapping all night is yourself;
Mornings you wake up listless;
How could you choose this life, & how
Among friends, deny kindness? You keep your eye
At death—or death's abyss;
You never choose to drop.

Sometimes you refuse to put up with yourself
But you go on talking,
Thinking, maneuvering
Over the dark & chartless waters
& under mysterious orders not to come in.

Philip Levine is an impressive poet, within reach of the major achievement, but to my sense muffled and monotonously acrid; easy to respect, hard to like, his poems do not converse so much as they entomb. Levine endows with poetry people from whose lives poetry is totally absent and he goes about it with tight lips, clenched fist and an eye that refuses to supply more than the rudimentary elements which rightly belong to the depressed classes that inspire his unrelenting bitterness and compassion. While, in *1933*, his best work to date, there are fewer ellipses that baffle the reader's consent to negotiate, the climate is unchanged: a sustained growl of thunder on a hot day from a zinc sky over a baked-out valley in California, or Spain or Illinois or anywhere; it's the Levine climate, the Levine setting, a landscape of stubble, rusting machinery and closed warehouses; a population of the dispossessed or the overworked or the unawake, immured in still-life tableaux: "no lights in the kitchen, no one sits/on the sofa, no one dreams in the tub. . . ."; "No one comes home from school . . . the papers bleed in a puddle . . . a photo torn in half/ dances in the grate/ like a cry for help . . . a turnip forgotten/ darkens/ at the back of the drawer . . . even the dead are growing old." A specialist of the irreversible, Levine is always down by the head or coiled in narcotic tension. His verse is commonly unmusical and abrupt, strapped within lines rarely exceeding six syllables, although in this sequence there are notable exceptions and an unfamiliar relaxation of his be-damned-to-you austerity of ornament. In his fashion he creates a world—a sub-world, to be pertinent—from his obdurate, mirthless chronicle of scrap, loneliness, war, and factory hands with "bloodless sandwiches/ folded in wax paper." ". . . the streets darken with flies/ all the dead fathers fall out of heaven" . . .

There is the last darkness burning itself to death
there are nine women come in the dawn with pitchers

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there is my mother
  a dark child in the schoolyard
  miles from anyone
  she has begun to bleed as her mother did
there is my brother, the first born, the mild one
  his cold breath fogging the bombsight
there is the other in his LTD
  he talks to the phone, he strokes his thighs
  he dismisses me
  my mother waits for the horsecart to pass
  my mother prays to become fat and wise
    she becomes fat and wise
  the cat dies and it rains
  the dog groans by the side door
  the old hen flies up in a spasm of gold

("1933")

Richard Ellmann remarks, in his introduction to the Norton anthology, and he *does* say, "At the risk of over-simplifying," that "the general framework within which modern poets have written is one in which the reality of the objective world is fundamentally questioned." If it were *fundamentally* questioned there could be no "framework," but we know what he means. I'm sure that the definition is not embracingly tenable, although it is a useful one for perceiving the unity of very much of the best modern poetry; typically, it is more germane to the French poets, I'd say. Ellmann was certainly unable to exclude from his pages many Anglo-American poets for whom the objective world is all too maddeningly *there:* hence, their recreation of a poem-world which strives to refute it (in Levine's case to perpetuate it in a soundless inferno). Confessional poets often fail dismally because the means they must employ are derived from the very world whose reality they are *strenuously* questioning; the strain of confirming their ego while compelled to doubt its validity is too much for their poetry to control.

Robin Fulton, a Scot who teaches in Norway and translates Scandinavian poetry, is assailed, in his own work, by contradictions of *order* in the so-called objective world, by disorientations when he changes position on the earth or when time visibly passes. "From Certain Angles" one of his poems is titled; this is his omnipresent theme: "from certain angles a plane coming in to land/ looks stationary"; or he writes of being "in the middle of a dark wood that is neither dark/ nor light but a dialectic of shadows; or again,

I come into my stairway; light from the high roof
divides each flight down the middle,
as I climb up my right eye is blind

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my left counts steps for my left foot
while my right foot takes incredible chances

("Double Vision")

and elsewhere ". . . our car is a glittering speck in the valley, we pretend/ we've reached somewhere and go back getting smaller and smaller/ and as we shrink the moor goes on expanding" ("Open and Closed Spaces"). Fulton is unsure what to do, poetically, with this sensation, principally optical, yet undermining the psychological supports on which one depends for identity and communication; he repeats it, variably, carries it into the surreal, is less confident when laboring to resolve it philosophically.[2] Fulton is not morbidly excited by the phenomenon; he remains curious, fascinated, exploratory. The longest section of his book, "The Songs of Archaeopteryx," seems to represent a rather desperate effort to recapture certainty with hypnotic concentration on metric and subject-or-verb parallelism; the stanzas have line-openings of this sort: the rain pricks, the dew stings, the wind bruises, the sun melts, the snow annuls, the frost reminds; she sleeps, she talks and talks, she smiles at the camera; they count the eyes, they listen to the voices, they are outnumbered, their names all sound the same. . . . And so forth, which quickly has the effect of automatic writing and is unprofitably tedious: to the reader, at any rate, whatever purpose it may be serving in the development of the poet. For Fulton *is* a developing poet, authentically puzzled by the precarious alignments of the ego in time and space. (Nothing especially modern about this; the seventeenth-century poets were equally upset, and intrigued, by the same discovery.) I rather wish Fulton would get back to the Scottish place-name poetry with which he introduces the book; he may be finding that the longest way round is the shortest to an unknown destination. As of the present, he is most himself when quizzical in the lightless hours:

London, midnight, the north train, ready to go,
the last doors locked, but still waiting, is hushed:
the travellers, exhausted, are all prostrate on their bunks,
they are mummies or astronauts prepared for a long journey.

Cologne, 2 a.m., someone half wakens and points
"cathedral" at a brick wall, I take his word for it:
a loudspeaker is soliloquizing at great length
marshalling rows of consonants in deep formation:
no one seems to get off or on, a station guard
watches, thrumming his polished holster, he understands
but isn't listening, the speech must be for someone else

somewhere else: mile after mile of abandoned track

[2] Laurence Lieberman handles the complexity of the sensation with greater assurance in two poems, "The Vanishing Classroom" and "The First Light" (cf. *The Osprey Suicides*).

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running alongside our own bright main line,
at times out of sight under hooding weeds.

("Remembering Trains")

Still, I prefer my poems inhabited—by flesh and blood and sharks' teeth. Dave Smith is my man. And I'm dumbfounded at not hearing his praises sung on every side (in American quarterlies, not in the streets of Europe). How can I best introduce him?—to readers who need the introduction: as the man who is writing the poems Robert Penn Warren should have written if his ear had censored and tuned his chiming? as a lineal descendant of "The Scop" in his own poem "who delivered the news from each/ seam he wore on his flesh,/ news of wars, of death/ in the snow-capped mountains,/ of oceans crossed and lush lands/ where the fishmongers hummed,/ of one father who beat his son/ to a bag of squishy seeds/ and was hung in a plumtree. . . ."? *Scop:* of the Anglo-Saxon court, but syntax and spirit are Elizabethan. Listen (same poem):

. . . . He played a guitar, too,
laid down on the stage in the wood
the acts of the latest rage, and good
man that he was, hung God's grace
like a critic's chronicle
above the mantels where whittlers
spat through the space of teeth
and applauded distance. Still,
there were those rumors . . . . they
questioned him, all this love,
where could it lead to? In the back
red eyes glared, and he knew it.

Blank verse, by sound if not sight: hyperbole succeeded by a plain strophe, the shift from speedy alliteration to the prosaic aside, controlling tempo and seducing the ear with underplayed truncation. Always, in these poems, the speaking voice: the inseparable fusion of eye-and-ear image. We speak of *poetic* film-makers and *cinematic* poets. The poet was there first. *He* invented the concise shot, the cut, the closeup, the graduating distance—and he alone must impel his actors so that his dialogue has the requisite value. Dave Smith, incidentally, writes poems *about* movies (not, I think, his best): watch him make his own. "Note from a Woman's War Record: Late 1864." The siege of Richmond. He gives us in a few phrases the bearded, dusty officer at a ball, the widow who doesn't yet know she is. "Madame, so good/ to see you in these hard times. . . . Good for you perhaps,/ George, she said, her pewter voice/ flat, hard as fox's teeth."

They walk, they smile, cups
fiery with iced cider. A band's brisk march
smothers the ping of pickets

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in North Richmond as girls in old dresses spin like
tattered leaves in a wet light.

He coughs, stiffens at one whose face he has known, takes
her mother's arm under his blue sleeve,
pats it as one would tamp nails
in horses' hooves, turns aside to issue a prompt order,
cocks his ear to a cannon's boom.

Slowly her teeth appear in strained smile. She sees
his uniform is thick with mud, badly torn.
George, we are all going mad.
Your son, he is well? He nods. I have news of your
husband. Will you waltz?

To question the reality of the objective world in verse is a solemn enterprise; to expose the self as wincingly vulnerable demands no less tact than courage. Even so, the *dramatic* imagination in poetry cannot lightly be subordinated because it contents itself with telling a story by implications, economically pictured, foregoing the more popular strategies of autobiography or ingratiating forensics. Drama of another kind than the above is distilled and tinctured with Gothic in the first-person poem, "A Daylight Lady," inspired by this appended quotation, our sole clue to the savage comedy of the original event. "In 1826 Miss Ann Saunders, becalmed on the ship of Captain John Kendall, ate her fiancée, John Fryer. . . ." Smith's poem is freighted with little miracles, echo-laden motifs, knife-edge hates conveyed with ivory elegance of diction. Here is the virtual apex of his high macabre:

When it comes that hunger does not slip the mind
like pain, dear John, it sticks close
along the limbs, singing to
the last instant. I began by toasting your arms;
your white breast I savored with
a salad of eyes and ears.

The thighs I kept near the end for warmth, and
your skull I gave to a woman I saw
rise in the sea, for I never
was a selfish creature. In cold clear currents
I have seen you smile in grass
where white gulls feed.

For readers, if such there be, deaf to this music of the unspeakable, who will only be moved when a poem is addressed to a limit situation they can utilize emotionally because its contemporary application is explicit, Smith's "Head Feint, Forearm and Glory," in which football and two wars are sardonically compacted, may be the aggressive appeasement

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they are waiting for. Unarguably it will stand with the best of Robert Lowell or Philip Levine. (First and last stanzas quoted):

> August. The pig field next to the schoolyard
> vomits its breath into the clutch
> of bodies which also vomits,
> getting rid of smoke, fear, whiskey,
> and the face of a corpse in the blue Pacific.
> The coach's head count is short. A tackle,
> two halfbacks, a noseguard drag deep mouthfuls
> in front of a drugstore where a willowy blonde
> counts her change. Others who could not keep
> their heads down doze endlessly in sunlit
> fields: it is 1945.
>
> . . . .
>
> September. The pigs have died out and the cold
> whips through the line like a fist. Father
> we have made it, me with the legs of the heron
> and eyes narrow with fear, you with your All-American
> feints: I have practiced breaking a man's jaw
> with your forearm shiver; my elbow aches to kill.
> We will not die this year or any year though we may
> lie down with the dead and cry for glory. It is 1960.

A dozen, at least, of Smith's poems, are flavored with the presence of the native artisan or local crank—e.g., "Rooster Smith's Log Canoe," "Hard Times, But Carrying On," "Mending Crab Pots," "The Spinning Wheel in the Attic." They can be read at the pragmatic level, incremental tributes to the anonymous trades; eventually they will suggest the supple arts of the poet, working alone, unregenerate, like "The Lost Hunter in the Dismal Swamp," his "knife marks deep in wood, like/ a language or survival." ("The Old Whore Speaks to the Young Poet" is mandatory reading; it comprises all.) "Captain Carmines' Death Song" is not unworthy of comparison with Hopkins' "The Wreck of the *Deutschland*." "The Shark in the Rafters," a showpiece of narrative development and of exquisite fright, is renewed proof that in poetry there is no portentous substitute for the precise accentual curve of language, for the rhythmic sum of thing and metaphor disciplined and elevated by an uncommon ear; no substitute, either, for a poet's having performed his share of the world's rugged tasks, thereby quickened in the imagination to the ordeals of those who spend a lifetime on the coast of existence and never adorn themselves with that titanic conception, tragedy.

Fishermen capture a shark in whose jaws and gut there is yet the crunched body of a shipmate. "Under the stuttered snatch of the winch/ they draw him by pulley and wheel . . . into the open fishhouse." Then the women come, "out of the darkness of pine needles/ through the labyrinths of swamp grass/ where ruptured boats lie half-buried."

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Some come as widows and some as children,
but everyone comes as lover
to stand facing this last house at the point
where there are no windows, no doors,
only a roof and a mild iron-headed animal
who cannot swim or walk but is
at ease in air like a diving bird,

all possessed
by his long timber-shaking shadow,
whispering like women who know the quick mouths
in the sea are the reddest hearts, whispering
he is beautiful and terrible, terrible.

Taking a steel bar to the unmerciful jaws, the men pull the teeth one by one, gouge the eyes into a paper bag, draw the bones and rip the flesh, loose the entrails—and the unrelenting poem drives on, crimson and aquamarine, to its *largo* resolution: "chunks/ of a fisherman's leg." . . .

all debris, gobbets bloodied and sparkling
as they fall through the housefloor
and drift toward the feet of the women,
the naked, hungry children, the unburied
boats as still as mutes; and a man
begins at last to descend among them.

And this afternoon
while her children plunge and dive in the light,
a woman shall climb stairs and lie
with only a swimmer's shadow
on her breast, in the room
where a clock's familiar rasp
makes her spin and whisper

as if to a face crusted with salt,
a mouth cracked like summer clouds, bearing
the white sheer teeth of the shark
that follows her everywhere.

(That masterful suspension, ". . . *and a man/ begins at last to descend among them*" has the same value as, in "A Daylight Lady" I quoted from above, the abrupt, innocent diminuendo, *"for I never was a selfish creature"*).

A man who can write like this should have had a grand poet's name; Chidiock Tichbourne or Fulke Greville or Galway Kinnell. He was christened Dave Smith. We recollect the dry rejoinder allegedly made by Edward VII, on being introduced to one of that tribe. "Smith! Yes, we all know *that* name." Would that, in this case, we all did.

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SONYA RUDIKOFF

Heroines of Literature and of Life

IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW how many young people nowadays write in diaries or journals of their future plans, and whether any of them exhort themselves to follow heroic examples as the young Boswell did, telling himself "Be like Richard Steele." We hear a lot about role models and identifications; it is thought quite important for young black students to see adult blacks on television, and in positions of importance in banks; and one of the enduring arguments for women's colleges is widely thought to be the example they offer of adult women in scholarly and professional careers. The arguments have gotten a bit muddied, naturally. For one thing, there is enormous confusion about just how young people "identify" with "role models," and whether that process can be manipulated so consciously and explicitly as some of our contemporaries believe. The emphasis may be misplaced: perhaps the choice of examples and heroes is far more privately determined, less subject to benign intervention. Heroes and heroines and examples for the conduct of life often arrive unbidden, without cultural sanction. They straggle before us in a complex order ranging from the public examples shared by all to the more secret and appealing figures whose meaning is cherished alone.

Literature and life, history and the present, all provide examples, and it is part of the business of literary or political discussion to examine and measure these various postures or actions in a kind of imaginative rehearsal of life's possibilities. The story, the play, the tale, the myth, the legends and dramatic pageants of a tribe, the sagas of a people, the novel of contemporary life—all involve us in their knotted actions for the purposes of individual instruction and cultural experiment. It is the awareness of the loss of this entire universe of discourse that is troubling when we read and speak of the decline of the novel, because more explicitly controlled forms of individual and social instruction have taken the novel's place, and the tone is harsher, and the hand is heavier, the heroes and heroines more limited in interest and stronger in the power to dominate. When Vineta Colby discusses the English novel of the early nineteenth century,[1] and the myriad heroines, heroes, and pictures of life presented by its (mainly) female authors, we are saddened to think how little the general public is given nowadays by the novel. When Elizabeth Hardwick[2] presents her interesting perceptions about the Brontës, about Ibsen's heroines, about Zelda Fitzgerald, and Sylvia Plath, or discusses the crucial themes of seduction and betrayal, it is simply appalling to

[1] YESTERDAY'S WOMAN: Domestic Realism in the English Novel, by *Vineta Colby*. Princeton University. $12.50.

[2] SEDUCTION AND BETRAYAL, by *Elizabeth Hardwick*. Random House. $6.95.

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acknowledge that a habit of thought was stolen from us somewhere along the way.

Miss Hardwick suggests at the end of her title essay that these themes which have been the pillars of the novel for two centuries are now obsolete: "you cannot seduce anyone when innocence is not a value." She is one of many observers who note that the social transformations in sexual attitudes and imperatives have incidentally eliminated a significant basis for the novel: Hester Prynne and Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Clarissa Harlowe become curiosities. The heroic qualities of endurance, tolerance, dignity, independence, solitary grief, suffering, and transcendent stoicism are the heroism of the betrayed and seduced: what happens then to the heroism? The heroine is "under the command of necessity, consequence, natural order . . . a bending to those commands is the mark of a superior being": what then? When life, circumstances, and the imagination of them no longer present such heroines in the sexual drama, it is because the plot has gone. No one is seduced and betrayed anymore, and if, as Miss Hardwick observes about *Adam Bede* and *An American Tragedy*, "biology is destiny only for girls," and, later, that "technology annihilates consequence," it becomes clear that the problem of heroism for both heroes and heroines invites further reflection. In the novel as in life, the sexual relation, although personally important and even monumentally powerful in its effects, is no longer imaginatively, socially, or politically significant, nor linked with the theme of discovery of self or entrance into the great world, nor associated with knowledge, power, corruption, and danger. All the preoccupations and devices of the old novel seem to have been simply blown away like cigarette smoke.

The novel of domestic realism, which is the subject of Professor Colby's study, was constructed for readers intensely interested in the details of life, as if the novel, like the Dutch genre painting it was often compared with, existed solely to offer truthful pictures for instruction and guidance. The fashionable novels of Mrs. Gore or the other "silver fork novelists," the descriptions of Maria Edgeworth, the domestic interiors of Charlotte Yonge, the social interiors of Harriet Martineau, Miss Mitford, Mrs. Sherwood, the educational or evangelical novel—all were available to those who wanted to find out about life, who did not want tragedy or intense heroics but rather "the true romance of human life," the domestic bourgeois story. One of Mrs. Gore's most popular novels was called *Women As They Are: or The Manners of the Day* (1830), and Thackeray admired her enormously. Harriet Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1834) was a tremendous success because, in her words, it presented "sketches of society, in narratives of those who labour and earn and spend, who are happy or otherwise, according as the institutions under which they live are good or bad." The evangelical novels and tracts of the early nineteenth century instructed readers in the application of religious principles to the daily life of the poor and the laboring classes. Everywhere there was a profound interest in the texture of life and in rules of conduct.

It is not Professor Colby's thought to persuade us to read Mrs. Bar-

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bauld, or Susan Ferrier or the Reverend Legh Richmond (whose *The Dairyman's Daughter* was still actively read in some two million copies circulating eighteen years after its first publication!) because they might not be readable today. She does recommend Mrs. Gore's *Cecil* (1841) and Harriet Martineau's *Deerbrook* (1838) and Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853). But it is as a background, an imaginative environment, a congenial proving-ground for Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Thackeray, Dickens, James, for Forster, Hardy, Lawrence, that these earlier novels become interesting. The habit of looking closely at the life in city and country, at the parsonage, the dairy, the farm, the hovel, the rectory, the schoolroom, the salons of society—that habit, and the interest in keen observation of detail, all of which is to be found in abundance in the early novels, prepared the way for the social interest of the great Victorian novel by developing an appetite for the genre. Similarly, the close scrutiny of ambition and motive, the developing concern for the interior scruples and dramas of the heroes and heroines—in Maria Edgeworth, in the religious tracts, even in the cautionary tales of fashionable life—all prepared the reader to think later on about Dorothea Brooke and Lydgate and Adam Bede and Gwendolyn Harleth, developed the taste for the complex Victorian problems and fates still to come. Professor Colby's views of this earlier stage in the novel's short life are extremely interesting and informative; even Harriet Martineau and Maria Edgeworth seem more appealing than before, and Mrs. Gore, with her ten children and some two hundred volumes of poetry, drama, and fiction, her social life and knowledge, all in sixty years, is an intriguing prodigy.

Miss Hardwick's literary interest is rather different: she has more of a stake in heroines than in their fictional lineage and circumstances. In fact, several of the women who solicit her attention were the *writers* of the fictions themselves, such as Charlotte and Emily Brontë, or played out intricate dramas in their own lives, such as Jane Carlyle or Dorothy Wordsworth, or Zelda Fitzgerald, or as writers constructed stories about themselves and played the major role even as the script was being written, such as Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf. What interests Miss Hardwick is less the form in which the heroine's task or journey, suffering or resolution is presented, or the understanding is to be communicated or evoked, but much more the heroic figures themselves as isolable examples of women's lives, purposes, vulnerabilities. Thus, she apprehends each of them with remarkable vivacity, vividness, and intimacy, as if she had just had lunch with them. The intimacy is especially compelling: she is able to speak of, say, Sylvia Plath, almost as a percipient member of the family might, in full awareness of the emotional textures of that tortured and torturing woman's life, grasping her plight even with a certain anger at her, and disbelief, impatience, wit, and irreverence, a little too knowing to be wholly sympathetic. Miss Hardwick speaks in the same way of Virginia Woolf, and of Zelda, of Charlotte Brontë, who were all *real* people, as she does of Ibsen's heroines, Hetty Sorrel, Tess, Clarissa, Hester, who were imagined—although no less real to the reader. She gets them all with in-

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credible closeness, informality, knowledge of their behavior, canny assessment. She is alert to them as if they were real, and is refreshingly aware of the financial plight of both real and imagined heroines. What she is especially interested in assessing them for is their adequacy as women, their resourcefulness in the life in which they find themselves, and their heroic transcendence when they are—inevitably—betrayed.

This is a most absorbing project, and Miss Hardwick's book is full of valuable commentary. The enjoyment is as powerful as the informality, and the amused gaiety she finds in the subjects that command her attention is infectious. No one writes so amusingly about literature as Elizabeth Hardwick! There are dangers of course in the marvelous phrases, the *bon mots*, the throwaway lines and deliberate refusals to pursue. And in these essays, when she explicitly isolates her heroines in order to appropriate them more intimately, she is somewhat more successful with the "real people" than with the heroines of literature. Charlotte Brontë seems to be the favorite, and serves as an example of concentration, energy, ambition, professionalism, determination, independence, affection, desperation, romanticism, nobility, and then—"she died, on the brink of domestic contentment"—betrayal. Tess is another favorite, as is (inexplicably) Nora of *A Doll's House*. The discussion of Ibsen's heroines is possibly the most unsatisfactory part of the book, almost as if she had started with an idea about "the new woman" and insisted on demonstrating it in defiance of the plays! Heroes and heroines of literature don't lend themselves to being abstracted from their imaginative contexts as people in real life can be. The created people are part of a large complex structure which itself makes point and meaning by using them, and, although the life around Sylvia Plath or Virginia Woolf was not without meaning, it was hardly directed or marshalled to reveal meaning in the way novels and plays do.

Is it the surrounding climate of contemporary feminism persuading Miss Hardwick to assert that Nora is free-spirited, practical, courageous, independent, realistic, and that the famous slamming of the door really begins a new glorious life? And why should she insist that "because Nora is free and whole, she does not present the puzzling tangle of deceit and subterfuge, suppressed rage and dishonesty, that are so peculiar a tendency in the women of Ibsen's other realistic plays"? In fact, that is precisely what Nora does present, what the entire play presents! Every detail of Ibsen's is working to show exactly that tangle, which is also to be linked with Women's Lib of 1879 or of 1974 for that matter. This curious reading of Nora's action and of the whole play is repeated in an equally curious grasp of *Hedda Gabler* and *Rosmersholm*, which distorts the plays as given in favor of a somewhat perverse view of the heroines. Certainly Nora would agree that she is a free spirit, courageous and full of gaiety and generosity, married to the wrong man! Surely Hedda would agree that her motivation is obscure, that she values style above all else, that she has lost her bearings without her father, that "everything is wrong with her morally"! And of course Rebecca West would accept the characterization of "fiercely engaging woman," intelligent, deprived, living by her wits, and

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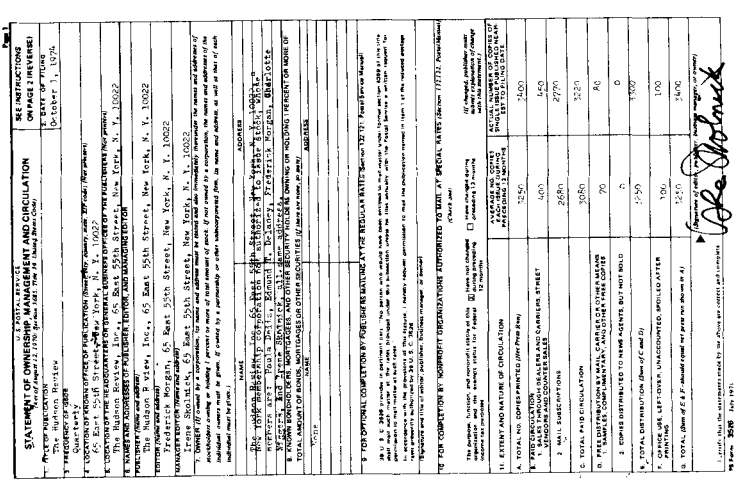
"torn apart by the kind of high motive she wishes to offer life and the decision and the low passion and cunning by which these high dreams are to be accomplished"! These are in fact the very self-conceptions which the plays set out to test, but they are not the conclusions. Otherwise, Nora, Hedda, and Rebecca don't need the plays. Ibsen's heroines are just as subject to the snares of the "claims of the ideal" as are the troubled heroes, and just as likely to be seduced and betrayed by them, and this is *their* tragic revelation working through the plays. But an excessive concentration on the heroines obscures the dramatic point for Miss Hardwick: she finds *Hedda Gabler* "not in any true sense a grand tragedy," partly because at the end Hedda's husband and her friend are quietly sorting out notes for the burned manuscript and it seems like "tidying up." Would she say the same about Fortinbras appearing at the end of *Hamlet*, tidying up that mess?

Quite as much as the hero, a heroine needs her drama, her narrative, her story; to stand for something, she too requires a background to stand against, and an action, a journey, a task. If technology has annihilated consequence, if the old drama of seduction and betrayal is no longer available, then the heroine will be seen to need another action to realize suffering and transcendence. We need to know not just the normative qualities of heroism abstractly, but what happens, and only then can we ask and know why it happened. Contemporary fiction is notorious for its reluctance to engage us in this way with heroes and heroines. It occurs more readily in popular culture, in Ann Bridge and Simenon and Helen MacInness, or in the TV shows and serials which command the attention of ten or twenty million in a single hour. The exemplary roles of Mary Tyler Moore, of Archie and Edith Bunker, of Marcus Welby M.D., of Sonny and Cher, and others of that vast company are as intimately known and cherished as the figures of the old evangelical tracts. It's worth pondering, what great works of art in the future might *they* be preparing us for, those heroes and heroines of the tube?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HAYDEN CARRUTH

To Live in a Park

FOR MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS Central Park has been a subject of controversy, most of it inspired by the conflict between the idea of the park as a chunk of nature and the idea of the park as a social or political utility. The nature people have wanted to keep it pristinely green; the politicians have wanted to pave it, divide it, "develop" it. God knows how much wordage, and I'm sure only He could imagine how much heat, have been expended in the dispute, which continues today as fiércely as ever. But to my mind the whole issue has been complicated by another conflict, namely, between the ideas of the park as a chunk of nature and as a work of art,—or if not a conflict at least an ambiguity, which it certainly was in the mind of the park's originator. So much is clear from the new biography of Frederick Law Olmsted, if not a great deal more.[1] It is part of the larger ambiguity between art and nature, imagination and reality, that has confused our minds since the time of the cave paintings, if not before.

For my part, except during relatively brief periods I have lived at a long distance from the park, so perhaps I have no say in the matter. If I venture a generalization it is only because I cannot see any basic difference between Central Park and the rest of the world. The conservationists, the environmentalists, the ecologists, with their talk of "preserving the wilderness," etc., give me a laugh; a rueful laugh, a sympathetic laugh, but still . . . are they realists? The world we live in, or on, the surface of this planet, *is* a work of art, like it or not, as surely in the northern Green Mountains as on the corner of Fifth and 59th: a botched, ugly, crass, sentimental, vain, stupid enough work, no doubt, in which all of us who share sensitivity to artistic values (to say nothing of the human!) are extremely uncomfortable most of the time; yet it shows aspects of good contrivance here and there. Granted this much, and since I see no basic means of reversal except comprehensive suicide, what can we do but continue working with what we have, trying only to make it a little better? Some people, including Laura Roper, have applied the word *sacred* to Central Park. Nonsense; Central Park can be changed and improved as easily as my back yard, and both of them need it. Moreover I flatter us—i.e., we who share sensitivity to artistic values, etc.—by believing that we know a trifle, a hairsbreadth, more about the function of art than did Americans of a century ago, and especially about the function of art vis à vis nature or received reality in general.

At any rate we know more than Olmsted did, though he was a man, as they used to say, of refinement. As nearly as I can make out, he was more than that, an acute, active, vigorous sensibility; yet not an original one.

[1] F.L.O.: A BIOGRAPHY OF FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED, by *Laura Wood Roper*. Johns Hopkins University Press. $15.00.

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His taste was the taste of his time and place, parochial America. He was unable to step outside it or beyond it. The chief early influence on his attitudes was the work of Andrew Jackson Downing, the brilliant horticulturist of Newburgh, and Downing in turn was close to the whole "Hudson River school," with its emphasis on the romantic, not to say gothic, aspects of landscape. Beyond this Olmsted knew and revered the parks and estates of England, not the monumental Palladian artifices, such as Alexander Pope had helped to lay out for his friend Temple at Stowe, but rather such public parks as that at Birkenhead, where Joseph Paxton, designer of the Crystal Palace, had turned one hundred and twenty acres of flat farmland into a varied prospect of "artful naturalness." It was close to what had delighted Olmsted in his native Connecticut, the elm-lined meadows of the Housatonic Valley, the Litchfield hills and lakes, the lawns and avenues of summer places at the shore. Olmsted never spoke of the environment or the habitat or even the wilderness; he spoke of "natural scenery," and a park for him was a "pleasure-ground." It was nature improved, in other words, nature romanticized—he read Ruskin and thought him superior to Emerson—and this idea was what he took with him when he fell—quite by accident, after earlier ventures as an unsuccessful farmer and a somewhat less unsuccessful journalist—into landscape architecture. In a word what Olmsted wanted, what he strove all his life to create, was the "picturesque."

Landscape was an art, but for Olmsted it was also a socially oriented art. Again and again he emphasized, both in his pronouncements and in his designs, the function of his parks in relationship to their larger communities, their role in freeing and uniting the urban populace. At least this was his view in the early and middle phases of his work; toward the end he became more and more touchy in his attitudes toward change, more and more austere in his views of artistic purity. In his own life, in other words, Olmsted combined both sides of the conflict that has raged over Central Park and most of his other public parks ever since. What would he have thought of the love-ins and festivals and demonstrations that have torn up his shrubbery and littered his turf in recent years? I like to think he would have approved and applauded, at any rate during most of his life, and this is what August Heckscher would like to think too. In his new book Heckscher, who was Parks Commissioner from 1967 to 1973 and responsible for introducing a good deal of this new activity to the park, defends his policy as in effect an extension of Olmsted's original concepts, an extension which at the same time did no violence to the park's physical layout.[2] I cannot judge. I wasn't there. Moreover there are elements in Heckscher's book that I don't like, such as his patronizing social attitudes and his constant reference to the park system as his "empire." But in general I find nothing to object to in his ideas of park management.

The two books under review here are both mediocre, but both do what they set out to do—what would be the point in judging them harshly?

[2] ALIVE IN THE CITY: MEMOIR OF AN EX-COMMISSIONER, by *August Heckscher*. Scribner's $8.95.

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Heckscher's book is a personal defense of his administration, an account of his activities and problems, and a brief discussion of political life in New York during the tenure of John Lindsay. It will be of interest to New Yorkers and will have minor value for students of urban affairs and historians. Laura Roper's book is a scholarly biography, comprehensive, heavily documented, often tedious. Like many biographers who rely primarily on collections of correspondence, Roper goes too far in recording details, I suppose in the understandable if not excusable belief that it would be a pity to discard what one has gone to so much trouble to discover. Thus we are very likely to learn from her book the name of the restaurant where Olmsted ate lunch on any particular day, but we learn very little about his relationship to his wife, for instance, or his real qualities as a man and an artist. A more perceptive biographer will be needed to deal with these matters. Meanwhile Roper's book contains all that anyone will ever need to know about the external details of Olmsted's birth, life, and death, all lucidly organized and set out in the sturdy sentences of conventional academic prose.

As I say, the conflict over Central Park still continues. Apparently now the nature faction has won a round. I saw in the paper the other day (*The New York Times*, 29 July 1974) a notice that a "preservator" has been appointed to the park's staff, a professor from Columbia who will be in charge of making plans to restore the park to the exact specifications of the original blueprints made by Olmsted and Vaux—Calvert Vaux, that is, who was Olmsted's long-standing partner and a trained architect, and who is rarely given the credit he deserves for his share, certainly an equal share, of the firm's accomplishment (he is not mentioned in the *Times* account). What does this new development mean? I don't know. Is the park to become a museum? I don't know. Must the whole city become a museum in order to be habitable again? I don't know this either, though there are signs that something of the kind is happening. It is a sorry outlook. We all understand what happens to works of art—and persons—when they are institutionalized. What I do know is that for a year I worked on Fifth Avenue across from the park and for six or seven years I lived in Chicago near Jackson Park, another of Olmsted and Vaux's designs, done for the Columbian Exposition of 1893. No matter how littered and worn and crowded they were, these parks were godsends; I cannot imagine life in the city without them. A bit of green, even a bit of honest dirt, is a treasure in the city. Olmsted is given too much credit when he is called the originator of landscape architecture in America. But he was certainly its popularizer, and his energy and foresight, more than anyone else's, were responsible for spreading the fashion of urban "pleasure-grounds" in the second half of the nineteenth century. If he had done nothing else, though he did, at least he saved these spaces from the stone, concrete, steel, and glass that surround them. It gives us one firm basis, however narrow, for our attempts to create the art of life in our time, one firm cultural antecedent. I don't believe we need to "give thanks," whatever that means; but an inner sense of gratitude and connection is a warming thing in the struggle.

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ROGER SALE

Fooling Around, and Serious Business

NO NOVEL OF THE QUARTER, and probably of the year, will be as much asked about as Joseph Heller's *Something Happened*.[1] There are people who haven't read *Catch-22*, but not many, and it has given us more names and phrases and lines than any other American novel in at least a generation. In the thirteen years since *Catch-22*, Heller has published only one mediocre play, and a part of what has become *Something Happened*, which is a huge and most unlikely book. The safest thing to say is that it is neither masterpiece nor embarrassing failure, very much like *Catch-22* in its essential technique and outlook on life, and quite a bit different in every other way. If, in the last thirteen years, Heller has had to stare a great deal at the typewriter and wonder if he could possibly write a second novel as good as his first, he can be reassured that while no, he has not, he has nonetheless done something strange and even silly, and brought it off more than he should have been able to, more than perhaps anyone else could have done.

There is a kind of short story that is often written, and seldom well. It has sentences like "In the office in which I work there are five people of whom I am afraid," and "I think that maybe in every company today there is always at least one person who is going crazy slowly," and "This fiscal period, I am flirting with Jane." It is possible for such stories to run as short as a few hundred words and still be much too long: flat, dripping, paranoiac depression. The narrator says of himself, "I throw caution to the wind when there isn't a breeze" and of his surroundings, "From sea to shining sea the country is filling with slag, shale, and used-up automobile tires." The best of the wit is quickly forgotten, awash in the swamp of torpor and self-pity. In short, a good form only for very short tales. So Heller, who must know all this, writes these sentences and says he can make a novel of close to six hundred pages. But try as he might, *Something Happened* is much much too long, a novel many won't finish simply because the fact that its author is greatly talented and hard at work, extremely impressive in making a novel out of one-line jokes, does not alter the other fact that a great deal of it is boring.

Heller knows better, because he knows he needs to tell his stories over and over before we will see that life is every bit as bad as he knows it to be. It is true, furthermore, that in the final retelling of some of the novel's central stories—the death of the mother, the marriage that needs lovelessness to keep going, the fear that the son will die before the father—Heller is

[1] SOMETHING HAPPENED, by *Joseph Heller*. Knopf. $10.00.

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as scary and moving as he is in the final retelling of Snowden's death in *Catch-22*. The narrator learns early in the book that he is going to replace Andy Kagle as sales manager of the company, and, late in the book, he comes home to tell his wife he has:

> "The big speech I'm going to have to make to open the convention. I'm head of the department now. That might not mean much at home but it means a hell of a lot there. I run the whole show. I can do what I want."
>
> "Can you get Andy Kagle his job back?"
>
> "Fuck you," I tell her.
>
> "You're just no good, are you?"
>
> "I told you. I warned you. I don't want you ever to say that to me again."
>
> "I'll say anything I want," she shouts back at me heatedly. "I'm not afraid of you."
>
> "Yes, you say that to me often," I remind her. "And then you sober up, and discover that you are."
>
> She shatters. "You bastard." The tears form quickly and are streaming down her face. "You won another argument, didn't you?"

This is good, and much better given the novel pressing upon it, because every speech is the result of many earlier speeches, so that what we have here is not just an argument but a marriage. And a book this long is bound to have enough good Hellerisms that I could quote a pageful of very good ones and still not have exhausted the store. But the material is just too thin—almost all of it concerns the daily life of the company and the family, and no one pretends either is very interesting—and the tone too insistently sad and depressed. My sense is that only people who are just like the narrator will like more than parts of the novel. The shame is that the last fifty pages are as good as Heller wants them to be, moving and searing and final; it may be that one can get most of what is in the last two sections without reading the rest. In any event, neither scorn nor adore; however unsuccessful, *Something Happened* is serious business.

Given that—and I admit to being much impressed that Heller had wanted to try so hard a second time—we can move rather quickly through some other novels, all by people who have done good things in the past, and who now seem to be just fooling around.[2] Richard Brautigan, for instance, still young, the only writer of the sixties recommended to me by students whom I enjoyed, author of the charming *Trout Fishing in America*, and author, alas, of *The Hawkline Monster*, which is decidedly uncharming and literary, obvious, empty, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid stuff:

[2] THE HAWKLINE MONSTER, by *Richard Brautigan*. Simon & Schuster. $5.95. THE ROAD TO MANY A WONDER, by *David Wagoner*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $6.95. SPREADING FIRES, by *John Knowles*. Random House. $5.95. TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY, by *John Le Carré*. Knopf. $7.95. ENDING UP, by *Kingsley Amis*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $6.95. NAPOLEON SYMPHONY, by *Anthony Burgess*. Knopf. $7.95.

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> They had some fried potatoes and steaks for dinner and biscuits all covered with gravy at Ma Smith's Cafe, and the people eating there wondered why they were in town, and they had some blackberry pie for dessert, and the people, mostly cowboys, wondered what was in the long narrow trunk beside their table, and Magic Child had a glass of milk along with her pie, and the cowboys were made a little nervous by Greer and Cameron, though they didn't know exactly why, but the cowboys all thought Magic Child sure was pretty and they'd sure like to fuck her and they wondered where she had been these last three months. They hadn't seen her in town. She must have been someplace else but they didn't know where. Greer and Cameron continued to make them nervous but they still didn't know why. One thing they did know, though. Greer and Cameron did not look like the kind of people who had come to Billy to settle down.

This is followed by two short paragraphs, one about more pie, the other about gunshot in the hills, and that's it for a chapter called "Ma Smith's Cafe." There are maybe a hundred such chapters in *The Hawkline Monster,* all as edgeless and pointless as this one. When Brautigan tires of gunmen he writes about identical women named Miss Hawkline whose father made a monster, and when he tires of that he has the Miss Hawklines see the dead butler in the hall and say "I'd like to get fucked." It's a terrible book, deeply unfunny, in no need of having been written.

David Wagoner is older, his best achievements are among his poems, but a number of his earlier novels had flaws that were the result of serious effort. He's given up on that now, writes only successes. Here is the opening of *The Road to Many a Wonder:*

> I'd probably have went Pikes-Peak-or-Busting without any extra help or discouragement, but what made it certain sure was my old man cussing our farm. We'd been scratching to hang on to it for five years, but I could tell there wasn't going to be no sixth when he stood there that early March in 1859, up to his shoe tops in Cass County mud (some of the slimiest west of Plattsmouth, Nebraska Territory, where they know how to make it), and commenced laying his extra-special Sunday-miss-the-meeting curse on it.

Since that language is about as native to Wagoner as Bantu, it must have been hard to write, but as in all literary writing, when the effort goes into the language devoid from everything else, the mountains keep bringing forth mice as they labor:

> "We didn't have no chest of drawers at home. I don't have but two pair of drawers anyway, so I don't reckon I need no chest for them."
>
> "It could just as well have been her hope chest," Millie says. "Perhaps she lost that too." Her eyes were shiny.
>
> "I've got plenty of hope," I says. "But I keep it in my own chest."

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There can't be many motives, and none of them good, for writing this way, words tossed around like cracked ping-pong balls, as though the only task were to *sound like* Huck, or Jamie McPheeters. It is no occupation for a grown person, and I'm sorry Wagoner chose to write it.

Perhaps there is less cause for being depressed at the fooling around to which John Knowles and John LeCarré have reduced themselves, because Knowles's *A Separate Peace* and LeCarré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* looked like books by essentially slick writers that just happened to work. The wonder now is that it is LeCarré and not Knowles who is still making the money, because Knowles's *Spreading Fires,* magazine stuff though it be, is neat and short and competent, lots of knowing talk about that ancient Mediterranean blue and possible incest and possible homosexuality and possible love even. It doesn't try to be funny, and isn't, or to be about human beings, and isn't, and so casts no dirt on life because it isn't about life. LeCarré, on the other hand, is really dull and really pretentious in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy,* plodding and gloomy. Eric Ambler gave the spy story good plots and well-observed exotic atmospheres; LeCarré offers only boring shoptalk, in the name of telling it like it is, presumably, the spy business is just a business, see, so who is to complain if he sounds like Sloan Wilson in *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.* Where Joseph Heller tries, and tries and tries, to find edges and sadnesses to the clichés about big company bureaucracies, LeCarré accepts them, literally, gloomily. I kept wondering if he were trying to find some way to fool all the people all the time.

Kingsley Amis's *Ending Up* is so much better than Brautigan or Wagoner or Knowles or LeCarré's that it might seem the news about him is not bad at all, but it is in a way worse, because he has more raw talent, more native wit and observation, than the others put together. I have heard it said that Amis is a real novelist, and I know no one who does not wish that he were, but I hope I'm not just giving myself away if I say that for me his best books are *What Became of Jane Austen?* and *On Drink.* Presumably Amis himself has mistaken his talent for a novelist's because he is untiring in his delight in saying nasty funny things about his characters. In *Ending Up* the people are particularly vulnerable because they are over seventy; in this passage they are being visited by the grandson of one of them:

> Keith was seized by boredom—a poor word for the consuming majestic sensation that engulfed him, comparable in intensity to a once-in-a-lifetime musical experience, or what would be felt by the average passenger in a car driven by a drunk man late for an appointment. Needling Bernard had given temporary relief, the couple of minutes a member of a forced-labour gang might spend leaning on his spade. All too soon, the overseer was back with his whip. Rachel took the now writhing children off to do a jigsaw puzzle, or watch while she did it. He could not blame her; not all that far from crying (the fellow who coined

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> "bored to tears" would have made a fortune in the slogan-writing game), Keith led the two old women through a sort of explanation of how television commercials were put together, an explanation preceded by an explanation, for Adela's benefit, of what a television commercial was.

This is not claptrap, but genuine venomous wit, and a lot of *Ending Up* is really nasty, and some is really funny. But the characters exist only so Amis can wound them, and when he tires of the fun he just kills them off with casual carelessness. Amis is frightened of life, no question, and much possessed by death, too, but he won't face up to that—which is precisely what Joseph Heller does do—won't make that the stuff of his books. There's hardly need for me to insist on this, since Amis's two most important models, Waugh and Compton-Burnett, could have shown him what's wrong had he wanted to know it. This waste of talent is a great shame. Granted that these are not great days for the English, but others have seen how to be not just funny and nasty when faced with a diminished thing, and Amis has not.

Of course fooling around can be elevated to a principle, proclaimed high art. For years, Anthony Burgess says at the end of his *Napoleon Symphony*, he had wanted to do a novel "where the horrible Marquis DeSade comes up against Jane Austen," "the whole thing planned in four Mozartean movements." But Burgess met a film-making friend who talked him out of that, and into Napoleon-à-la-Eroica, so Burgess, eager to please and fool around, went ahead and did it. Worked up his Napoleon, got Beethoven in his bones, and ended up with 363 pages of nonsense. You can hear Beethoven in it, but to imitate musical form is to do just that, no more. Napoleon in Italy, Napoleon in Russia, Napoleon at Waterloo, Napoleon on St. Helena. Burgess, raconteur but no boulevardier, offers himself plenteous observations which indicate the English were the only ones on the right track back then, so who's to cavil if he has a spot of fun with those continental types who thought killing and governing was all. Here we are with Napoleon in retreat, the subject is bridges across the Neiman:

> I could practically feel my lower jaw dropping into my ball sack with the sheer fucking astonishment of it. There was this lot, artillery and all, trying to come back to where everybody had already come from, except for the Ninth Corps, and making us wonder why we'd had to build the fucking bridges at all, there's the army all over for you. It was a shitscaring astonishment for everybody including this brigade as it turned out to be, though their astonishment was in finding both N and J blocked with this ragged brainless whimpering load of bastards shambling over crying out for France as though it was a meat breakfast being served on the other side of the bridges.

Not much Beethoven there, more like Pynchon, just as much of the rest is like Joyce. But Burgess isn't brilliant and sick like Pynchon, or willing to

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work at it for years like Joyce, or great like Beethoven. I'd love to have a meat breakfast with him on the other side of that bridge, and his Napoleon isn't a bad fellow either, but if Burgess cares about anything here it is probably Jane Austen and Mozart, and he hasn't, or won't, discipline himself to do more than envy them and imitate more modern masters. This is his twenty-first book. It's not bad, but not good either, and so must rank as a disappointment.

A pause here to mention one last piece of mere foolishness, *Underlay,* a paperback original by a writer unknown to me, Barry Malzberg.[3] It is about horse racing addiction, has lots of short chapters like Brautigan, lots of fancy effortfulness with narrative voice like Wagoner, but halfway through it discovers its story and moves thereafter to a fine conclusion. It perhaps reads too much like up-to-date Damon Runyon, so people not interested in the lore of touts and horses may not want to endure the chatter about why Harry the Flats was buried in the backstretch at Aqueduct. But the point here is that literary fanciness is now the province of good paperback hacks like Malzberg, and so he is a nice caveat for writers no more fancy or clever than he, only more pretentious.

At least three of the remaining five books are seriously limited or flawed in ways that keep them from competing as simple good reads with Amis or Burgess or Malzberg, but all are the work of writers meaning serious business, and two are wonderful examples of what novelists can achieve, well into their careers, as rewards for taking their talents with full seriousness.[4] It would be nice to report that in *Swiftie the Magician* Herbert Gold has somehow redeemed a career that hasn't seemed to get anywhere for quite a few years and books. It turns out, however, that after he finished writing about his father and his boyhood in Cleveland, Gold never really had materials for a novel, and *Swiftie* is notable mostly as an honorable holding action, a serious attempt to do the work he still can do. It is self-consciously about the sixties, Camelot in New York, flower children in California, everyone splitting at the end. It was not a good decade to be With It unless one was very young, and Gold's hero suffers because he has only ambition and slick talent to keep him going, and this isn't enough to keep him from doing what everyone else does. Gold himself suffers because he wants to use the hero to see and comment on the scene while at the same time indicating that this vision is limited, and he just isn't interested enough in his not interesting hero to work out his relation to hero and scene carefully. Which leaves him with his commentary, some of which I found rather good, much better than that in Gold's *Age of Happy Problems,* though as the following will show, the good commentary tends to lapse rather too often into easy satire:

In London Karen would have been distinctly another class—the pretty

[3] UNDERLAY, by *Barry Malzberg.* Avon. $1.50.

[4] SWIFTIE THE MAGICIAN, by *Herbert Gold.* McGraw-Hill. $6.95. ENORMOUS CHANGES AT THE LAST MINUTE, by *Grace Paley.* Farrar Straus & Giroux. $6.95. THE BLACK HOUSE, by *Paul Theroux.* Houghton Mifflin. $6.95. A STRANGE GOD, by *Thomas Savage.* Little, Brown. $7.95. LOVE FEAST, by *Frederick Buechner.* Atheneum. $7.95.

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> shopgirl who becomes a model. But this was the time of Swinging London everyplace, when nobody comes first, nobody comes from anyplace but Liverpool. . . . The childhood sound of leaves on windows was, for Karen, the sound of tires spitting gravel as the short-order motel visitors pulled up to pay their three-hour rental to her father. The trailers stayed longer; the Shevies and Pontiacs were brief about it. When she saw tumbleweed on television, the old west, cowboys, Indians, lawmen, she never guessed it was the same tumbleweed which slipped across the freeway to float in the swimming pool. It was Karen who stood there with a scoop, cursing her teenie curses at age thirteen (fuckit, fuckit, fuckit) and cleaning the Polyduramite-Spartan-Aqualon pool.

Commentary that knows neither fictional surroundings nor the integrity of a vision almost always is going to have troubles with tone and sustenance, but Gold tries hard here to keep it all going, and he knows enough now to see that *Swiftie* must be a short book; no mammoth Helleresque insistences for him. So even as it disappoints, it does not depress.

Grace Paley says she writes stories because art is too long and life too short, which is probably why her tales of woe are very short and written within an inch of their lives:

> Once there was Bugsy, dragged up from the gutter where she loved to roll immies with Russell the bartender. Then Ricardo, to save her from being an old tea bag (his joke), hoisted her on to the pulpy rods of his paperback culture high above her class, and she still administers her troubles from there, poor girl, her knees gallivanting in air. Bugsy lives forever behind the Horney curtain of Faith's mind, a terrible end, for she used to be an ordinarily reprehensible derelict, but by the time Ricardo had helped her through two abortions and one lousy winter, she became an alcoholic and a whore for money.

The words tuned and fitted, every sentence carrying its exactly contrived weight of irony or surprise—when you write that way, art is long indeed, and a short story is an immense journey. It's all New York—"wherever you turn someone is shouting give me liberty or I give you death"—and mostly Jewish—"Her grandmother pretended she was German in just the same way that Faith pretends she is an American." Despite her title, there are no enormous changes at the last minute, or at any time, for Paley's characters. They move with inexorable lostness toward the grave: "Faith's grandfather soon departed alone in blue pajamas, for death"; "at that moment, listening to him talk, she could see straight ahead over the thick hot rod of love to solitary age and lonesome death." There's even a "Conversation with My Father" in which Paley is told she cannot tell a plain story, and when she tries to write like Maupassant she fails, because while the lives she describes are indeed plain and grim, her telling is insistently unplain, and the effect is to make one remember sentences—their place in a

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paragraph, even, or on the page—rather than the lives of the people. The individual tales meld and blur into each other, because Paley works too hard, I think, at the wrong things. But she is good, no question, careful, aggressive, confident, in pain.

Paul Theroux is a writer new to me, and while I think *The Black House* is mostly a mistake, I also found it very impressive, the work of a real novelist writing with real authority, someone who from the first page is intent on the serious business of other people's lives. The story is, as a friend of mine pointed out, a reverse "Heart of Darkness": an English anthropologist, after ten years of studying an isolated African tribe, returns home and discovers in an English village in Dorset the same village as the one he left, an isolated tribal world of suspicion, acrimony, and suppressed violence. Theroux creates the English countryside slowly, and very well indeed, as with this:

> This landscape had been subdued by the season and by men; it was settled and ordered, there were signs of farming to the horizon, and even those far islands of trees with the graceful shapes seemed deliberately planned. But it was frozen, the hedgerows broke the fields, and the green looked infertile, threatening to die and discolor for the winter. The mystery of the landscape was this apparent order, for which Munday, who saw signs of habitation but no people apart from the tractor driver—and he was tiny—could not discern a purpose. This emptiness seemed unlikely, and it was unexpected; not an England he had ever known, so green and new to the eye, it was a rural scene he had always suspected was spoken about because it did not exist, a willfully inaccurate nostalgia duplicating the Bwamba's inability to describe their own swampy homeland because they did not see it. He wanted to deny it. But there it was before him, like an illustration in a child's book of ambiguously menacing rhymes. Emma said, "I told you. It's lovely. I knew it would be like this—you see?" The colors were right, the air pure, and the enclosing valley so shaped at their feet it invited them to wander down to explore it.

That has as many twists as a passage by Grace Paley, but it is less self-conscious and more able to lead into a long story; the differences between Munday and Emma, the invitation of the landscape that withholds what is being offered—and the story of the village that ensues is all very well done indeed. Furthermore, there is a chapter describing a day the Mundays have in London, mostly seeing sad and corrupted old African acquaintances, that is a little masterpiece as well as a full warning to the Mundays that the heart of England is indeed dark.

But the wages of homelessness are mutedness, suspicion, and ineffectuality, so the Mundays themselves are unpleasant folk to have around, and Theroux feels he has to have at least a ghost story to expose Munday to himself. Parts of the ensuing psychodrama are very exciting, but the story seems only partly to understand itself, and at the same time it leads

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Theroux away from his original desire to establish the Dorset village alongside the remembered African one. There is less need here to say precisely what it is that doesn't work than to say that the total effect is indeed murky and unsatisfactory—but there is less need to insist on that than to repeat that Paul Theroux, whatever the tangles he has gotten himself into here, is a real writer, full of achievement even in this unachieved novel, full of promise. *The Black House* is his seventh book, and he is only thirty-three.

After a number of tries and partial successes, Thomas Savage, America's best kept literary secret, achieved in *The Power of the Dog* of 1968 the finest single book I know about the modern west; only some things in Wright Morris can touch it. Savage himself has lived in New England for a number of years, and he has been working all that time to write about that country with the same fullness and assurance he finally gained about the dry country of ranchers. He may still do better than *A Strange God,* but unquestionably in this book he has come very close to a major success. The genre is perhaps best described as Marquand with a sense of doom, and if the fact that the wealthy suburbs around Boston are for him adopted country means that he can never have quite Marquand's assurance about the relation of things and names to status and ambition, Savage can make up for that with a much sterner inquiry into the terms of a life than Marquand was ever led to make. If Savage seems to work too hard at being a namer of parts, he nonetheless can name them quite well indeed, and create a good sense of character as he is doing so:

> He had certain qualities and abilities, but skill with his hands was not among them. He believed in honor and in being good, although he had no reason, especially later in his life, to believe in God. His courtesy brought to mind high starched collars and malacca canes. He was a born listener, always a contributor to another's ego. His ability to match a face to a name and a name to a face never failed to flatter. He could remember the most casual conversation. He possessed almost total recall, knew where things were, who had said what. He never missed the inflection in a voice. Once he had written down a telephone number it was his forever. But broken objects baffled him. He had never in his life changed a fuse or replaced a simple gasket in a faucet. He was grateful that Norma could. He stood aside and watched uncomprehending when a service station attendant replaced or gapped a spark plug. Carburetors and distributors were beyond him. He admired the man who came to fix the power mower and to open drains. His wife or his secretary changed his typewriter ribbons. His answer to a cranky object was to jiggle it or kick it.

That does betray a too eager desire to list, to name, to show that Savage himself knows, but that is a fault entirely on the right side, as it were, because it gives Savage an intentness that most namers of parts never feel they have to have.

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This passage comes early in *A Strange God*, and immediately after we learn that Jack Reed, the hero, for all his bafflement with tools and machines, had once made a snowplow for his son, and he gazes fondly at it, years later, as he and his wife prepare to leave their expensive house on the Wellesley line. We then learn that Reed intends to go downstairs, out to the garage to start the car, and to commit suicide; the story begins with that pressure on it, and seeks to lead us back to that point, in full knowledge of why the suicide must happen. Jack Reed is from a small town in the midwest, and he manages to discover and develop his talent for listening and remembering so that he becomes John W. Reed, owner of his own insurance agency in Boston. Savage exposes without a hint of satire the concomitants of that rise, the increasingly expensive houses and cars, the attempts to subdue Jack Reed into John W. Reed, and, most important, the investment Reed makes of his own life in the lives of his son and daughter. They will have the best, not just in things but in values; there is a moving sequence where Reed tries to show his son the way the beauty of a dog's loyalty must be tempered by careful discipline, and Reed can only be forceful and the son can't possibly do more than feel the force as force. It is pain and love that Savage seeks to expose, not simple blindness but confusion, and the way they can during the course of a life lead to a need to die when the pathetic wishes Reed has for his children fail to come true. The boy for whom Jack Reed made the snowplow—"Tim had stared. 'You made it,' he said. 'You did it with your own hands.' And he gave his father a look."—drifts away, partly in disappointment that he does not want what his father wants for him, partly in bitterness at discovering his father one night with another woman. In a carefully but excessively contrived Christmas sequence, Jack Reed shoots his son thinking he is a prowler, and we are brought close to the scene of the novel's opening. Jack Reed is a murderer, however accidental, John W. Reed's insurance business begins to crumble, and Jack doesn't really care, because he feels closer and closer to a Presence he knows as death. He goes up to the attic, sees the snowplow, and Savage's writing gets up as high as he can possibly get it:

> For with time comes the first inkling and then the conviction that courtesy is not love, nor kindness nor compassion, that lust is common and love is rare except between father and child or mother and child. I want! I want! Marriage was torn between selfishness and generosity. Only from children do we expect nothing, demand nothing, not even understanding. Understanding? What was that?

And "the pathetic disparity between what had been and what was, between what one hoped and what happened" doesn't alter his desire to be done with himself: "It is a very short step between being one of the living dead and one of the dead."

The phone rings just as he is about to step out to the garage. He knows he must never again hear a human voice, he thinks of an awful story he

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recently read in a newspaper, and he feels the Presence of death has gratifyingly allowed him to escape:

> But he was not to be let off so lightly. The telephone rang again. The world would be heard. He froze. The only punishment exquisite enough to satisfy the gods is life itself—tracing the crooked paths his son might have walked, descending to the treacherous rocks beside the sea even if he couldn't swim.

So: "It was John W. Reed who cleared his throat and said: 'Hello?' " The simple pleasure of self-destruction that Jack Reed had moved toward is thwarted by the strange god that made him also be John W. Reed, listener to others, the man who picks up the phone.

It is a stunning climax, and I fear the quotations just can't do it justice because the words allude to so much that has come before. Sadly, too, even in Savage's finest moment there is something wrong. The distinction between Jack and John W. Reed is one Savage works very hard during the early part of the novel to make and enforce, but as Reed's relation to his children dominates the story it is one that seems easily ignored. Thus, as it returns decisively here as the pivot on which turns the discovery that the final punishment for Reed's life will be more life, it seems to come abruptly, unaccountably, playing a larger role than has been created for it earlier. The early and the late parts of the book touch hands at the end, but seem to leave out much of the middle. Still, whatever its flaws, *A Strange God* is that rare thing, a novel of domestic life that seems without extending the bounds of the ordinary to encompass deep understanding of how life is, what makes it happen as it does. If this is to be the climax of Thomas Savage's career, it is a fitting one, in which he can take great and justified pride.

Frederick Buechner's *Love Feast* is the third and last of his wonderful series about Leo Bebb, itinerant minister of the Gospel, savior of Herman Redpath, oil-rich Indian, founder of the Church of Holy Love, of Open Heart in Connecticut, and, in this novel, of Love Feasts in Princeton. The word about Bebb is simple—he lights up every page on which he appears, making each one a joy to read and to anticipate, and of all the characters in American literature, only Hemingway's Bill Gorton rivals him in that respect. Bebb is staying in Princeton, past seventy now, with a rich woman who is just as old, and on Thanksgiving they invite everyone to come to dinner, and only a few stragglers do. Bebb sees himself as the king in Matthew's Gospel who invited people to his wedding feast, and no one came, and so Bebb sends the stragglers out into town to round up more people:

> As for me, I ended up by the Palmer Square tiger full of claret and half convinced that either I was dreaming the whole thing or was having a nervous breakdown. The supper of the Great God, Bebb had said, with his jacket button almost popping off but everything else mercifully but-

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> toned up, zipped up, in place; and I thought how that made me some kind of apocalyptic wino almost certain as I accosted total strangers to be taken for a middle-aged degenerate or con artist. How do you invite people to a parable? Whom do you invite?

But the narrator here, Antonio Parr, Bebb's son-in-law, finds someone who in turn finds some others, and back at Bebb's the great feast gets underway:

> He said, "We all got secrets. I got them same as everybody else—things we feel bad about and wish hadn't ever happened. Hurtful things. We're all scared and lonesome, but most of the time we keep it hid. It's like every one of us has lost his way so bad we don't even know which way is home any more only we're ashamed to ask. We know what would happen if we would own up we're lost and ask? Why, what would happen is we'd find out home is each other. We'd find out home is Jesus loves us lost or found or any whichway. . . . Dear hearts, we got to love one another and Jesus or die guessing."

In *Love Feast* Buechner is working less hard than in *Lion Country* and *Open Heart* to make Bebb impenetrable, a man who might or might not be a fraud; here all stops are out, Bebb's preaching pours forth in unchecked confidence, the language of Jesus his so securely that what Bebb thinks no longer really matters all that much. He carries on his Love Feasts until the Princeton authorities gang up on him, and we learn later the IRS is after him too:

> "Inside there was a agent sitting at a big desk name of Connor. He wasn't much taller than a parking meter and he had eyes rolling round in his head like marbles and a breath on him you could have got money for in a package store. He made me stand there must have been five minutes while he diddled around with some papers he had, and then he looked up at me and said, 'Do I have the honor of addressing the King of the Jews?' That miserable little pen-pusher, I gave him as good as he gave me. I said, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' and he come back at me as quick as a water moccasin. He said, 'Well, maybe your kingdom isn't, but your form 1040 sure as hell is.' He had a secretary in there with a mouth painted on her didn't have any more to do with where her real mouth was than the map of China and she set in to snickering. . . . I did the best I could to explain it all out to that pitiful little Pontius Pilate how come I filed in the name of Jesus like I did and the point I was trying to put across doing it that way. He was just about as interested as he was whether I put on clean drawers that morning. Connor and that Jezebel with lips painted on her wouldn't fool a blind man, they're going to go through every record I got clean back to creation. Antonio, they're going to nail me up."

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But before they nail him up Bebb hides out at Bull's International Fireproof Storage on the East River, and Antonio and Bebb's daughter Sharon are taken there in a chase-hunt by Mr. Golden, who has gotten Bebb in trouble more than once because he believes in literally burning his bridges behind him. Later Bebb dies, too, in an airplane crash of sorts, only that isn't as good. Bebb can't die, obviously, but Buechner had to have done with him sooner or later.

The rest of *Love Feast,* the part concerning the death and rebirth of the narrator, Antonio, is good in places, but in general seems to me forced and pallid beside Bebb's Love Feasts. In *Lion Country* Antonio is pretty much just there to observe, in *Open Heart* he moves nicely into the story, in *Love Feast* he is suddenly asked to become a full-fledged human being, which is a terrible fate for someone born to be a comic seeing eye. It's quite clear to Buechner that Bebb himself is too splashy and brilliant to occupy the entire stage, but he is much better, especially in *Open Heart,* surrounding him with his alcoholic and suicidal wife and his sad and funny daughter, and the wonderful Indians of the Church of Holy Love, than he is asking Antonio to play a role equal in importance to Bebb. In *Love Feast,* furthermore, the daughter, Sharon, plays a key role in the lives of both Bebb and Antonio, yet she herself is barely allowed to appear, though she is just fine when she does. This last book, considered as a whole, then, seems the least satisfactory of the three. On the other hand, Bebb is never better than here, sad and moving as well as funny and bracing and capable of creating worthy belief even as he fails to make a life, to connect with others, to save himself in this world. As a sequence, Buechner's Bebb novels may not quite come off, but they should prove almost indefinitely rereadable, and I hope they become part of our permanent literature, always staying in print and getting taught and being used as standards of comparison and judgment. There isn't a badly turned sentence in any of them, and they add to our store of what is possible, they make life richer.

One last thought: the WASP novelist is not dead. Thomas Savage and Frederick Buechner show us not only what a career of hard work and a life of caring can yield, but that the American novel has more in it than urban pain and imperial splash and the regional heirs of Faulkner. Because the WASP novel seemed dead, because so many people did not want it to be, a great deal of pressure has been put on John Updike to be a great novelist, to justify the hopes and to dispel the fears of others and himself. If Savage and Buechner get anything like their due, that may have the effect of letting everyone relax a little, and of getting us to rejoice that we are not, or are not yet, what we had feared: a country of vast and homogenized sameness. Sad and torn and perceptive though he be, Heller hasn't the last word on us.

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